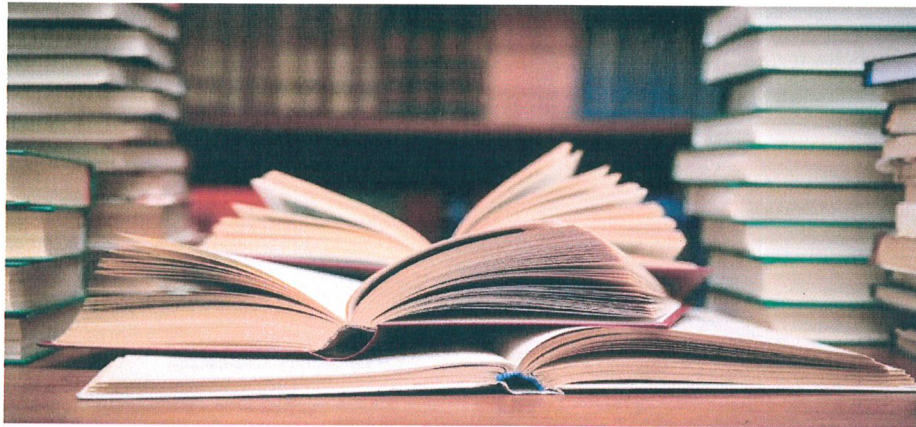


ENGL 313 – ISSUES IN WEST INDIAN DISCOURSE

SPRING 2022

DR. A MARIE SAIRSINGH



SUPPLEMENTARY COURSE BOOKLET

**POETRY
CRITICAL READING
THEORETICAL ARTICLES**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Poetry

- “The Sea is History” by Derek Walcott
“Glorianna” by Ian Strachan
“Guinea Woman” by Lorna Goodison
“Overseer: Good Hair” by Vladimir Lucien
“Island in the Sun – Side 2” by Kendal Hippolyte
“The Land of Look Behind” by Michelle Cliff
“Nigger Sweat” by Edward Baugh
“I am the Archipelago” by Eric Roach
“Robert Love Monument” by Christian Campbell
“Rocks of Refuge” by Marion Bethel

Critical, contextual, and theoretical readings

- “Retentions and Survivals” by Sidney W. Mintz and Richard Price
“Culture and Colonization” by Aime Cesaire
“Creolization and Nation-Building in the Hispanic Caribbean” by Antonio Benitez-Rojo
“The Battle for Space” by Rex Nettleford
“Race and Creole Ethnicity in the Caribbean” by Percy Hintzen
“A Dialogue: Nation Language and Poetics of Creolization” by Kamau Brathwaite and
Edouard Glissant
“Thinking The Diaspora: Home-thoughts from Abroad” by Stuart Hall
“Re-Engineering Blackspace” by Erna Brodber
“Articulating a Caribbean Aesthetic: The Revolution of Self-perception” by Gordon
Rohlehr
“Reluctant Matriarchs” by Lucille Mathurin-Mair
“Resisting Paradise – Introduction” by Angelique Nixon

The Sea Is History

Where are your monuments, your battles, martyrs?
Where is your tribal memory? Sirs,
in that grey vault. The sea. The sea
has locked them up. The sea is History.

First, there was the heaving oil,
heavy as chaos;
then, like a light at the end of a tunnel,

the lantern of a caravel,
and that was Genesis.
Then there were the packed cries,
the shit, the moaning:

Exodus.
Bone soldered by coral to bone,
mosaics
mantled by the benediction of the shark's shadow,

that was the Ark of the Covenant.
Then came from the plucked wires
of sunlight on the sea floor

the plangent harps of the Babylonian bondage,
as the white cowries clustered like manacles
on the drowned women,

and those were the ivory bracelets
of the Song of Solomon,
but the ocean kept turning blank pages

looking for History.
Then came the men with eyes heavy as anchors
who sank without tombs,

brigands who barbecued cattle,
leaving their charred ribs like palm leaves on the shore,
then the foaming, rabid maw

of the tidal wave swallowing Port Royal,
and that was Jonah,
but where is your Renaissance?

Sir, it is locked in them sea-sands
out there past the reef's moiling shelf,
where the men-o'-war floated down;

strop on these goggles, I'll guide you there myself.
It's all subtle and submarine,
through colonnades of coral,

past the gothic windows of sea-fans
to where the crusty grouper, onyx-eyed,
blinks, weighted by its jewels, like a bald queen;

and these groined caves with barnacles
pitted like stone
are our cathedrals,

and the furnace before the hurricanes:
Gomorrah. Bones ground by windmills
into marl and cornmeal,

and that was Lamentations—
that was just Lamentations,
it was not History;

then came, like scum on the river's drying lip,
the brown reeds of villages
mantling and congealing into towns,

and at evening, the midges' choirs,
and above them, the spires
lancing the side of God

as His son set, and that was the New Testament.

Then came the white sisters clapping
to the waves' progress,
and that was Emancipation—

jubilation, O jubilation—
vanishing swiftly
as the sea's lace dries in the sun,

but that was not History,
that was only faith,
and then each rock broke into its own nation;

then came the synod of flies,
then came the secretarial heron,
then came the bullfrog bellowing for a vote,

fireflies with bright ideas
and bats like jetting ambassadors
and the mantis, like khaki police,

and the furred caterpillars of judges
examining each case closely,
and then in the dark ears of ferns

and in the salt chuckle of rocks
with their sea pools, there was the sound
like a rumour without any echo

of History, really beginning.

Gloriana

here is sorrow enough
for ten tales times ten
and yet this woman,
this silk cotton tree
of a soul
rejoices more in her life
with each salt moon

here is a night so
deep and wide
it swallows song,
but my mother
shuttles an alto
thread of gold
through sackcloth dawns

men raise stiff statues
and scowling monuments
in their own memories,
they order lines composed
so children
never cease to trumpet
each trick and triumph

but what if i said
that this black woman,
far from History's
iridescence,
possessing no territories
nor treasure chests
save her soul
has been a sun
lighting worlds?
where are the epics

for our black mothers?
when do we print
dollar bills and emboss
them with the faces
of the cerasee sistren
who saved our souls?
here is burden enough
to leave backs brittle
pain enough
to snap the voice's cord
salt enough
to suck the sea fresh . . .

and yet, Gloriana stands
guiding the dying
guarding the living
with knees which will not buckle
and a voice that does not break

/

black woman
how many rescues
must you perform?

black woman
how many of your sons must
you put in earth?

black woman
how many times
must you sow without reaping?

mudda sista fren
how many trips to
the Throne of Grace
must you make
for your children?

/

these men seeking national
heroes and African kings,
do they have black mothers?
the kind that eat fire
and pass ice for pickney?
let them look to the dark figures
holding the Church up
at the four corners

let them look to the ones
who will wipe the spittle
from their mouths
if Papa Death sneezes . . .
this poem says
i have seen what you have borne
in God's name

this poem says
i see what it has all cost
in tears and silent nights
of the owl and the rat

mother of mine
saying prayers
in the four corners
to make hell a home

mother of mine
riding the crest
of syphilitic seas

mother of mine
singing anthems in
aborted dawns and viral rains

mother of mine
knowing too well
the Babylon boots
the hustlers and the whores

BLACK MOTHER OF MINE
LOOK AT ME GROWING IN
THE BEAMS OF YOUR LIFE!

i carry you in me, woman
i see what it has all cost
in tears and silent nights
in sorrow enough
for ten tales times ten
in nights deep and wide
enough to swallow song

i hear you singing
mother of mine
i hear you singing
above the cradle
above the grave

i have seen what it has cost
i have marked this life
of iron you have forged
of rainbows spun
out of sackcloth dawns

I thank creation
for your silk cotton soul

Guinea Woman

Great grandmother
was a guinea woman
wide eyes turning
the corners of her face
could see behind her,
her cheeks dusted with
a fine rash of jet-bead warts
that itched when the rain set up.

Great grandmother's waistline
the span of a headman's hand,
slender and tall like a cane stalk
with a guinea woman's antelope-quick walk
and when she paused,
her gaze would look to sea
her profile fine like some obverse impression
on a guinea coin from royal memory.

It seems her fate was anchored
in the unfathomable sea
for great grandmother caught the eye of a sailor
whose ship sailed without him from Lucea harbor.
Great grandmother's royal scent of
cinnamon and scallions
drew the sailor up the straits of Africa,
the evidence my blue-eyed grandmother
the first Mulatta,
taken into backra's household
and covered with his name.
They forbade great grandmother's
guinea woman presence.

They washed away her scent of
cinnamon and scallions,
controlled the child's antelope walk,
and called her uprisings rebellions.

But, great grandmother,
I see your features blood dark
appearing
in the children of each new
breeding.
The high yellow brown
is darkening down.
Listen, children,
it's great grandmother's turn.

OVERSEER: GOOD HAIR

We learned to hide from the Boss who
walked in the tick-tock of his shoes,
shimmering & clocking down the hall, counting down
to trouble and detention for our trespasses.
Confiscator of chains, rubber wristbands,
chokers; grand inquisitor for practical jokers,
hooligans, belligerents and perverts.
In third form, afros rose like the walls of
some medieval city, a rampart against the Boss's
reign. He had them all chopped down, blew
them off our heads with threats, snapping at each
defiant tuft of *nèg*, watching them fall like smoke
wafting toward the ground. In fourth form
we discovered the slick-back and spent
hours in the mirror, concerned, foppish,
our ancestors Percy Sledge, Smokey Robinson
and the Temptations. We tiptoed through the halls
our hair packed with grease, gel, cold press
– anything that would make our hair
lie down and behave and shine like the Boss's
shoes. With our hair quiet for so long,
our feet graceful tiptoeing around the school,
Boss became suspicious, glancing askance
at us; spent Monday assemblies
contemplating how he could wheel
and come back again. One day, walking the halls,
my hair resisting the grease, wriggling
in the sticky grasp of gel, shaking in the wind
like an *annafè* girl, the boss swooped round a corner,
grinning like a little boy who has caught a lizard.
He spun me around, shouting my last name, his mouth
spread wide with hide-and-seek glee, made
swiftly for my head and pulled my hair free.

ISLAND IN THE SUN — SIDE 2

I

island in the sun
my father's hand
stained with your soil
has never owned you
so, i am claiming you now
acre by acre
dream after dream

*(As morning breaks the heaven on high
I lift my heavy load....)*

that sun, that fucking sun:
our sweat would turn to smoke
dreams bake down to stone —
that was the heavy load we lifted

and we lift it still

island in the sun
'discovered' by Columbus
devoured by the British
'recovered' by the French
stripped and searched by Spanish not-so-noblemen
uncovered for the touch of merchant Dutchmen
passed across tables
hidden in the silken sleeves of statesmen
island
stone that the builders refused

but we lift it still

*(I see women on bended knee
Cutting cane for their family*

I see men....)
living and dying, it was cane
only we could know
how bitter it was
how deep its roots went
those women knelt
to feed a dragon —
there was no family
only successive crops of children
reaped
crushed
distilled
till the ratoons exhausted themselves
into dried old women .

II

and year follows year
wet flows down to dry
cane fields lie fallow
some die, some flourish again, some spring up, lives later
as ghettos, estates where nothing thrives
only acres of zinc, little plots
of misery and endless waiting
here and there, a patch of hope

o island island
the shackles and shacks
the treadmill of history turning
the dragon's teeth still gnashing in the factory
the white trash of the lives left
to the survivors
the shreds, the people of straw
like:
the alcoholic, who sets his glass between us
and curses

the whore, the abscess between her thighs;
curses
the sisters, their vices wrapped in hallelujahs;
curses
the madman carrying hell in a bag;
curses
“de whole rotten dutty stinking dutty John Crow life.”

bagasse

debris

detritus

III

children of Sisyphus
children of Cain
children of Rum and Coca-Cola
always asking:
who will roll the stone away?
Listen.

I say this stone is
a foundation, is
a new bedrock for the newborn
this stone
can slay Goliath
it is his headstone, flowers will grow from it
it is the dragon's final stumbling-block
his millstone, it will crush him
this island, this stone
hides a shape the world has heard of
never seen:
a man's shape, but more truly
prepare: we will soon break the stone
we will soon reveal him.

MICHELLE CLIFF

b. 1946

The Land of Look Behind

On the edge of each canefield or 'piece' was a watch house, a tiny structure with one entry. These were used for the babies of nursing slaves who worked in the fields. An older woman was in charge of the infants and the mothers came there for feeding time.

tourist brochure of the Whim Great House

A tiny structure with one entry
walls guttered with mortar
molasses coral sand
hold the whole thing fast.

One hundred years later
the cut limestone
sunned and salted
looks like new.

And feels like? And feels like?
I don't know.
Describe it.
Sad? Lost? Angry?
Let me get my bearings.

Outside
A tamarind tree with a dead nest in the first crotch
Dense mud construction.
Immense. The inhabitants long gone.
Hard brown pods crack underfoot
The soursweet flesh is dried.
Inedible.

Inside
One thin bench faces a blank wall.

MICHELLE CLIFF

No message from the watchwomen here.
No HELP ME carved in the mortar or the stone.
Try to capture the range—

What did their voices sound like?
What tongues? What words for day and night?
Hunger? Milk?
What songs devised to ease them?

Was there time to speak? To sing?
To the riverain goddesses
The mermaids bringing secrets
To bring down Shàngó's wrath.

No fattening-houses here.
Nowhere to learn the secrets
except through some new code
in spaces they will never own.

How many voices? How many drops of milk?
How many gums daubed with rum to soothe the teething
or bring on sleep?

How many breasts bore scars?
Not the sacred markings of the Carib—
but the mundane mark of the beast.

How many dropped in the field?
How many bare footfalls across the sand floor?
How many were buried?
I leave through the opening and take myself home.

Nigger Sweat

'Please have your passport and all documents out and ready
for your interview. Kindly keep them dry' – *Notice in
Waiting-room, US Embassy, Visa Section, Kingston, 1983*

No disrespect, mi boss,
just honest nigger sweat;
well almost, for is true
some of we trying to fool you
5 so we can lose weself
on the Big R ranch
to find a little life;
but, boss, is hard times
make it, and not because
10 black people born wutliss:
so, boss, excuse this nigger sweat.
And I know that you know it
as well as me,
this river running through history
15 this historical fact, this sweat
that put the aroma
in your choice Virginia
that sweeten the cane
and make the cotton shine;
20 and sometimes I dream a nightmare dream
that the river rising, rising
and swelling the sea and I see
you choking and drowning
in a sea of black man sweat
25 and I wake up shaking
with shame and remorse
for my mother did teach me,
Child, don't study revenge.
Don't think we not grateful, boss,
30 how you cool down the place for we comfort,
but the line shuffle forward
one step at a time
like Big Fraid hold we,
and the cool-cut, crew-cut Marine boy
35 wid him ice-blue eye and him walkie-talkie
dissa walk through the place and pretend
him no see we.
But a bring mi handkerchief,
mi mother did bring me up right,
40 and, God willing, I keeping things cool
till we meet face to face,
and a promise you, boss,
if I get through I gone,
gone from this bruk-spirit, kiss-me-arse place.

EDWARD BAUGH
Jamaica

Signifying: Robber Talk

I am the Archipelago

- I am the archipelago hope
Would mould into dominion; each hot green island
Buffetted, broken by the press of tides
And all the tales come mocking me
5 Out of the slave plantations where I grubbed
Yam and cane; where heat and hate sprawled down
Among the cane – my sister sired without
Love or law. In that gross bed was bred.
The third estate of colour. And now.
10 My language, history and my names are dead
And buried with my tribal soul. And now
I drown in the groundswell of poverty
No love will quell. I am the shanty town,
Banana, sugarcane and cotton man;
15 Economies are soldered with my sweat
Here, everywhere; in hate's dominion;
In Congo, Kenya, in free, unfree America.
- I herd in my divided skin
Under a monomaniac sullen sun
20 Disnomia deep in artery and marrow.
I burn the tropic texture from my hair;
Marry the mongrel woman or the white;
Let my black spinster sisters tend the church,
Earn meagre wages, mate illegally.
25 Breed secret bastards, murder them in womb;
Their fate is written in unwritten law,
The vogue of colour hardened into custom.
In the tradition of the slave plantation.
The cock, the totem of his craft, his' luck,
30 The obeahman infects me to my heart
Although I wear my Jesus on my breast
And burn a holy candle for my saint.
I am a shaker and a shouter and a myal man;
My voodoo passion swings sweet chariots low.
- 35 My manhood died on the imperial wheels
That bound and ground too many generations;

From pain and terror and ignominy
I cower in the island of my skin,
The hot unhappy jungle of my spirit
40 Broken by my haunting foe my fear,
The jackal after centuries of subjection.
But now the intellect must outrun time
Out of my lost, through all man's future years,
Challenging Atalanta for my life;
45 To die or live a man in history,
My totem also on the human earth.
O drummers, fall to silence in my blood
You drum against the moon; break up the rhetoric
Of these poems I must speak. O seas,
50 O Trades, drive wrath from destinations.

ERIC ROACH
Trinidad and Tobago

ROBERT LOVE MONUMENT

1835-1914

Come back Africa Abyssinia Guinea.
Ithiopia mighty nation come back.
Satta amassagana, psalm sixty-eight,
Black Star Line, Repatriation, UNIA.

The *SS Frederick Douglass*, Kingston, Harlem,
Jamaica Advocate, Emperor Selassie,
Nyabingi drums, Nyabingi drums.

Garvey, DuBois, Blyden, Padmore,
Césaire, Lumumba, Williams,
Nkrumah, Kenyatta, Senghor.

No one remember old Robert Love.
No one remember old Robert Love.

Respect due to this Bahamian man.
Gone to Jamaica, start bushfire,
teach Garvey what he know.

He who knew white minority rule,
knew a thousand islands,
mountains undersea.
Robe him in red black green.

Burning Spear, come chant a next one.

Wicked Babylon system,
all they do is lie and thief,
will not teach the children.
Bless up the man who clear
the road to Zion. He say:

*Own your own land,
look to the East,
lift up the race.*

Children, this a livication for Love.
Undivided everliving,
this Godbless lion.

Redemption coming, redemption coming,
the half that has never been told.
Lucaya arise and go to the harbour.
Greet your ship, your ship
of black and gold.

ROCKS OF REFUGE

I

These rocks of algaed fantasy
we know as home
dreams of refuge for lukka kairi*
canoeing to harbours north of war
zemis wrapped in hamacas

We call these sea-mountaintops home
stepping stones of gilded conceit
mildewed story of three ships loose at sea
old world lotto of silver chances
spectral laugh of renewal spiced in paradise

II

In an ocean of rocks far from home
fearless fancies of Dahomey and Congo
anchored in flat grey rocks of Yumey
climbed the lichened bluffs of Segatoo
hooked on flat yellow stones of Guanima

These islands we name downhome
where Eleutherian adventurers knelt
in corporate worship in Preacher's Cave
hands in prayer rebuking royalist storms
a bid for braziletto freedom and ambergris

III

We call these island flats home
peaks of an underwater mountain chain
colouring books of emerald infancy
dot-to-dot moss desires of slaves and loyalists
unbalanced on slippery turtle-back humps

This is the home soil of Sue's hangingtree
bedrock of flogged flesh transplanted
in strange sands of produce exchange
glassbeads feathers for gold nose-rings
alchemy of corn potato horse buffalo

IV

Here is where I plumb the heights
the clogged pipings of soul at the Tongue
of the Ocean I squat on Pompey's rock
of resistance and rub rock salt from Inagua
on stones where blood may flow again

We might make a warm poultice
of wet seaweed in Guanahani
soak in silver tin tubs of sage
of fevergrass lovevine baygerina
let pepper-leaf bring a boil to head

V

Let's rake and scrape fantasias in Samana
with feasts of grits stewfish johnnycake
drink communal cups of cerosee in Habacoa
make a perfect profit of pear-leaf tea
scull round reefs from Mayaguana to Bimini

Let us go dead centre now
home to our highest self
Mt. Alvernia fixed in a deep sea
liquid rocks mercurial and flat
afloat as ocean-mountaintops

*Arawakan name for the Lucayan Arawak peoples meaning "island people".

Retentions and Survivals

Sidney W. Mintz and Richard Price

If African-American cultures do in fact share such an integral dynamism, and if, as we shall argue, their social systems have been highly responsive to changing social conditions, one must maintain a skeptical attitude toward claims that many contemporary social or cultural forms represent direct continuities from the African homelands. Over the past several decades, historical research has reduced the number of convincing cases of formal continuities, but has hinted at new levels of continuity—levels which may eventually tell us a great deal more about the actual development of African-American cultures. Students of the African-American heritage have witnessed a gradual shift from the analysis of isolated cultural elements viewed largely from the outside, to the analysis of systems or patterns in their social context. Students of creole languages, for example, increasingly have located the unique aspects of these languages on the syntactic (or discourse) level, rather than simply on the lexical level; and analogous arguments have been proposed for such diverse things as art forms and onomastics.¹

These shifting perspectives are well illustrated by the history of studies of Suriname Maroon woodcarving. Traditionally, scholars considered this to be the prototypical “African art in the Americas”;² an art historian discussing this art among the Saramaka has noted that the “arabesques in openwork...even-sided flat bands, and...brass studs to enhance curvilinearity” strikingly recall eighteenth-century Akan work.³ Yet recent ethnohistorical field research strongly suggests that this distinctive art form was forged in the Guianas and is largely a nineteenth-century development. It has also demonstrated that many of the most striking formal similarities with West African art are quite recent innovations.⁴ More generally, such research urges upon us a reorientation of our focus, from trying to explain similarities of form considered in isolation to comparing broad aesthetic ideas, the implicit “grammatical” principles which generate these forms. The very real formal similarities between the art of the Maroons and that of some West African peoples are not, then, mere evidence of static “retentions” or “survivals,” but rather products of independent development and innovation, within historically related and overlapping sets of broad aesthetic ideas. The wood-carving of the Maroons, like their naming, cicatrization, and other aesthetic systems, then appears to be highly creative and to be “African” more in terms of deep-level cultural rules or principles than in terms of formal continuities: in short, a highly adaptive subsystem, responsive to the changing social environments of the artists and critics who continue to carry it forward.

We keep in mind that, in art as in much else, the relationships between individual artist and group are likely to be complex and subtle. To what extent art is produced and modified in a context of freedom of expression, and to what extent group and individual creator are bound by conservative values, must be specified separately for each society and, often, for each art medium or genre. We can assume that West African artistic expression varied to some degree from one

society to another, while the opportunity for individual creativeness or innovativeness probably varied with the social function of the particular art form. Presumably much the same has been the case with African-American art. Given the social circumstances of its beginnings, however, we choose to suppose that a high degree of freedom for variation may have been institutionalized in many art forms at the outset. In order to make the most possible sense of how these forms evolved in African-American societies, it will be necessary both to learn all we can of those initial situations, and to pursue our study of art and other African-American cultural manifestations in their social contexts,⁵ and not purely as delineations of changing or conservative forms.

Recent historical research on Afro-America also has taught us some of the dangers of extrapolating backward to Africa in the realm of *social* forms. We may mention but one obvious example drawn from our own work. Saramaka men, who now commonly have two wives each, turn out upon careful investigation to be far more "polygynous" (one might say "African-looking," in Herskovits's terms) today than were their ancestors two centuries ago, due to changing institutions in the wider society, with newly evolved patterns of wage labor and the skewed local sex ratios such patterns have created.⁶ It seems likely that systems of social relations are generally even more highly responsive to changing environmental conditions than are cultural systems. As in the cultural realm, however, we would suggest that delving below the surface of social forms to get at the value systems and cognitive orientations that underlie and accompany them may reveal long-term continuities of another kind.

In calling for more subtle, in-depth research, we do not mean to deny the existence of direct "survivals" or "retentions" in Afro-America, or that careful investigation of the specific reasons for their continued persistence will help us better to understand the formative years of African-American history. We might cite two brief examples. The ultimate "ordeal," the equivalent of the highest court in Saramaka today, is in the hands of a small cult group in a single village; its techniques, which include thrusting a medicated feather through the tongue of the accused to determine guilt or innocence, seem traceable directly to the eighteenth-century Kingdom of Benin.⁷ In this case, it seems likely that a specific cluster of ritual knowledge was carried to Suriname during the earliest years of slavery by a single specialist, and that the tradition (which is attested to in eighteenth-century Saramaka⁸) was perpetuated in much the same way as we describe for our hypothetical "twin birth" ritual. In contrast, divination with a coffin—the interrogation of the spirit of the deceased (in which the movements of the bearers of the corpse are "controlled" by the spirit, anxious to reveal the cause of death)—provides a different sort of example. It was a widespread practice in West and Central Africa as part of funeral rites, and we find it again in widely separated parts of colonial Afro-America—from Jamaica to Dominica to Suriname.⁹ Unlike the Saramaka ordeal, which involves a highly specialized body of knowledge from a particular society that nevertheless served a function recognized as crucial in many West and Central African societies, divination with the corpse was probably familiar to most of the first transported slaves. These two particular continuities, even viewed thus summarily, can be seen to illustrate somewhat different processes in the development of African-American cultures. Careful consideration of other such real historical continuities almost certainly will help us to understand some of the choices open to early African-Americans, as well as the later course their cultures took.

We wish to consider, in equally sketchy fashion, two other cases of continuity, partly in order to emphasize the relationship between continuity of culture and continuity of personnel, partly to enlarge the range of cases of such continuities, and to expose the complexity involved in their study. Following Emancipation in the British West Indies (1834–1838), free Africans were imported to a

number of British colonies, including Trinidad, in the hope of expanding agricultural settlement and of supplying additional labor to the planters. In a twenty-year period (1841–1861), Trinidad received 6,581 free Africans;¹⁰ between 1834 and 1867, that island received a total of 8,854 liberated Africans, taken off slavers headed for Cuba or Brazil by British cruisers.¹¹ A large number of different African cultural groups were represented by these migrations, including Ibo, Temne, Wolof, Yoruba, Ashanti, Fulani, and Mandingo peoples.¹²

In a tantalizingly brief but intriguing account, Carr described a “rada” (Dahomean) community outside Port-of-Spain, founded by one Robert Antoine (Aboyeve Zāhwenu) about fifteen years after his arrival in Trinidad. Antoine acquired a small property by purchase in 1868, where he settled with his common-law wife and son. By the time of his death in 1899, his house and compound had become a center for migrant Dahomeans, many of whom had previously settled nearby: “during the ceremonial occasions of those early days it is said that so large were the gatherings at the compound that there was hardly room in which to accommodate the people.”¹³

Antoine initiated and maintained a substantial portion of the Dahomean ceremonial calendar at his compound. It is significant that those who emigrated at the same time to Trinidad had included a trained *hubonō* or high priest, and two male *vodūnsi* (cult initiates), and all three of these men actively perpetuated traditional ceremonies. It may be of equal interest that the gods who are celebrated by this group often carry saints’ names, typical of African-American religious groupings in Catholic countries elsewhere, as in Brazil, Cuba, and Haiti. Carr asked his informants how the African deities acquired Christian names and was told that they had “always” had them. The idea that such names had been attached to the African godheads after contact with missionaries in Africa was rejected by the elderly compound member with whom Carr spoke. Thus we have no information as to how or when such names were in fact acquired.

It is not our intent here to examine in detail the correspondences and divergences between the religious expressions of this group and those typical of nineteenth-century Dahomey. But we must note that this case reveals both substantial continuity—as in calendrical allocation of ceremonies, gods’ names, priestly roles, sacrifice, possession, etc.—and substantial modification, both by syncretism (for instance, the attachment of saints’ names, which we believe to have occurred in Trinidad itself) and in terms of the sociology of the new setting. No male *vodūnsis* have appeared since the deaths of Alokasu and Kunu, who accompanied Antoine from Africa. The *Kututo* ceremony for the dead, which is held in November, is now linked to a Catholic mass for the souls in Purgatory. Five deities, who formerly possessed native African migrants, have not reappeared since the deaths of these men. Some shrines have vanished. Even in small ways, change reveals itself. The *Sakpata* shrine, still maintained in the compound, once had at its head a euphorbia plant, supposedly in accord with African tradition. But a child’s eyesight was damaged by the milky fluid of the plant some years ago, whereupon it was replaced with a dragonblood plant (*Dracaena* spp.).

Even without a thorough comparative examination, it should be clear that the sociocultural religious system of the homeland did not survive intact and unchanged in the new context—and, of course, it would be quite extraordinary if it had. Doubtless more significant is the fact that Antoine was able to count on the services of three trained religious specialists when he initiated the ceremonial calendar a century ago. While we cannot weigh the importance of the disappearance of male *vodūnsis*, we think it defensible to assume that it would have affected the forms and functions of the ceremonial calendar today.

A final example may be drawn from the literature on Afro-Cuban religion. While it differs in many ways from that provided above, it shares with the Trinidadian case a relative recency of

implantation of African custom in the New World setting. The slave trade to Cuba ended about 1865, though it seems certain that additional slaves were imported during several years immediately following. Curtin has estimated that twelve thousand slaves were imported in 1865, but calls this "guesswork," and suggests that he has picked a relatively high figure because he supposes that the trade continued briefly thereafter.¹⁴ Materials on the ethnic origins of Cuban slaves during the last stages of the trade are unsatisfactory; the trade was illegal, and manifests of slave ships, or other information of the sort available for, say, Saint-Domingue at an earlier period, are lacking. Nonetheless, it is certain that substantial numbers of Yoruba were imported, and the Afro-Cuban religious and linguistic materials suggest as much. Having carried out field investigations both among the Yoruba of Ife, Nigeria, and the Lucumí of Matanzas, Cuba, Bascom and Montero de Bascom were able to document continuities of certain kinds in divinatory practices, including the 256 permutations resulting from the casting of a sixteen-unit, two-part divinatory necklace. Though important changes in the materials employed, in the terminology of explanation, and in the pronunciation of terms have occurred, "Both the names and the order of the double figures ... check exactly with those recorded for the Yoruba by Epega, Aderoju, Frobenius, Monteil, and Dennett, for Dahomey by Bertho and Maupoil, and for the Ewe by Spieth."¹⁵ The Afro-Cuban data are particularly convincing because the various elements in divinatory practices are clearly separable, but occur in both Nigeria and Cuba in such intimate interrelationship that diffusion from Africa to the New World cannot be questioned seriously.

These two cases reveal both continuity and change. The Afro-Cuban case makes clear that a relatively complex portion of culture can be carried substantially intact from one locus to another. Though certain substitutions of material (e.g. coconut disks for kola nuts) occur and are obvious enough, migrant diviners needed only to have around them persons from the same or a related society where such divination was practiced to have been able to ply their skills. The Afro-Cuban divinatory practices, however, both show continuities with more than one West African culture and suggest that other groups besides the Yoruba contributed to the forms assumed by older materials in the Cuban context. The Trinidadian case does not demonstrate any obvious intermixture of original African forms, even though there was considerable change in the new setting over time. The Cuban case suggests that the African materials diffused from overseas originated with persons who were members of different groups, even though very solid continuities with past practice are demonstrable.

Two obvious features of these cases require mention. First, both of the emigrations in question, relative to certain others, occurred fairly recently. Second, in one case the migrants were free or freedmen, and, in the other, slavery had ended only about twenty-five years after the last migration. In both of these regards, the Trinidadian and Cuban examples differ substantially from most other examples of African continuities. In a general way, it can be claimed that both the strength of the continuities and their relative lack of modification probably are related to recency of migration and to the presence (in Trinidad) or nearness (in Cuba) of freedom. Such assertions do not explain away the many other cases of such continuities, often maintained in the face of great oppression and imposed disorder, nor can we deal adequately here with the whole issue of illegal slave trading, as it must have influenced the whole panorama of continuities in the New World. But overall, direct formal continuities from Africa are more the exception than the rule in any African-American culture, even in those such as Saramaka, which have been most isolated.¹⁶

Notes

1. See, for example, Richard Price and Sally Price, 'Kammbá: The Ethnohistory of an Afro-American Art,' *Antropologica* 32 (1972): 3–27; idem, 'Saramaka Onomastics: An Afro-American Naming System,' *Ethnology* 11 (1972): 341–67; Sally Price and Richard Price, *Afro-American Arts of the Suriname Rain Forest* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980).
2. Philip J.C. Dark, *Bush Negro Art: An African Art in the Americas* (London: Tiranti, 1954); J.L. Volders, *Bouwkunst in Suriname: Driehonderd Jaren Nationale Architectuur* (Hilversum: G. van Saane, 1966).
3. Robert F. Thompson, 'From Africa,' *Yale Alumni Magazine* 34 (1970): 18.
4. Jean Hurault, *Africains de Guyane: La Vie Matérielle et l'Art des Noirs Réfugiés de Guyane* (The Hague: Mouton, 1970); Richard Price, 'Saramaka Woodcarving: the Development of an Afro-American Art,' *Man* 5 (1970): 363–78; idem, 'The Guiana Maroons: Changing Perspectives in "Bush Negro" Studies,' *Caribbean Studies* 11(4) (1972): 82–105; Price and Price, *Afro-American Arts*.
5. See, for instance, John F. Szwed, 'Afro-American Musical Adaptations,' in *Afro-American Anthropology*, ed. N. Whitten and J. Szwed (New York: Free Press, 1970), 219–28; Sally Price, *Co-Wives and Calabashes* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1984).
6. Richard Price, 'Saramaka Emigration and Marriage: A Case Study of Social Change,' *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 26 (1970): 157–89; idem, *Saramaka Social Structure*.
7. Gerhard Lindblom, *Afrikanische Relikte und Indianische Entlehnungen in der Kultur der Busch-Neger Surinams* (Göteborg: Elanders Boktryckeri Aktiebolag, 1924), 92–93; John Barbot, 'A Description of the Coasts of North and South-Guinea,' in *A Collection of Voyages and Travels* 5, ed. Awnsham Churchill (London, 1732), 373.
8. C.L. Schumann, 'Saramaccanisch Deutsches Wörter-Buch,' in *Die Sprache der Saramakkaneger in Surinam*, ed. Hugo Schuchardt, Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen te Amsterdam 14 (1914): 46–116. s.v. *kangra*.
9. Charles Leslie, *A New History of Jamaica* (London: J. Hodges, 1740), 308–9; Thomas Atwood, *The History of the Island of Dominica* (London: J. Johnson, 1791), 268–69; F. Staehelin, *Die Mission der Brüdergemeine in Suriname und Berbice im achtzehnten Jahrhundert* (Herrnhut: Vereins für Brüdergeschichte in Kommission der Unitätsbuchhandlung in Gnadau, 1913–19, 3(2): 55.
10. Wood, *Trinidad*, 80.
11. K.O. Laurence, *Immigration into the West Indies in the 19th Century* (London: Caribbean Universities Press, 1971), 14.
12. Wood, *Trinidad*, 240–41.
13. Andrew Carr, 'A Rada Community in Trinidad,' *Caribbean Quarterly* 3(1) (1953): 40.
14. Curtin, *Atlantic Slave Trade*, 40, 43.
15. William R. Bascom, 'Two Forms of Afro-Cuban Divination,' in *Acculturation in the Americas*, ed. Sol Tax (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), 172–73; see also Montero de Bascom, 'Influencias Africanas en la Cultura Cubana,' *Ciencias Sociales* 5 (1954): 98–102.
16. A large but uneven literature deals with African survivals and retentions in the New World. Pioneering works include Herskovits, *Myth of the Negro Past*, and selected essays dating back to 1930 by the same author; see Melville J. Herskovits, *The New World Negro* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966) and Arthur Ramos, *Las Culturas Negras en el Nuevo Mundo* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1943). Bastide's *Les Amériques Noires* is available in English translation as *African Civilisations in the New World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971). A useful debate about survivals and retentions is to be found in *Caribbean Studies: A Symposium*, ed. V. Rubin (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1957), where M.G. Smith exchanges views with George E. Simpson and Peter B. Hammond (34–53).

Culture and Colonisation

Aimé Césaire

For the past few days we have been greatly exercised as regards the significance of this Congress.

More particularly, we have wondered what is the common denominator of an assembly that can unite men as different as Africans of native Africa, and North Americans, as men from the West Indies and from Madagascar.

To my way of thinking the answer is obvious and may be briefly stated in the words: colonial situation.

It is a fact that most native countries live under the colonial system. Even an independent country like Haiti is, in fact, in many respects a semi-colonial country. And our American brothers themselves, thanks to racial discrimination, occupy within a great modern nation an artificial position that can only be understood within the context of a colonialism that has certainly been abolished but whose after-effects still persist down to the present day.

What does this mean? It means that in spite of our desire to maintain a note of calm in the discussions of the Congress we cannot, if we are to come to grips with the situation, avoid raising the problem that has the greatest influence upon the development of native cultures, namely, the colonial situation. In other words, whether we like it or not, we cannot pose the problem of native culture without at the same time posing the problem of colonialism, for all native cultures are to-day developing under the peculiar influence of the colonial, semi-colonial or para-colonial situation.

But what, you may ask, is culture? It is desirable that this should be defined in order to dissipate certain misunderstandings and reply very precisely to certain anxieties that have been expressed by some of our enemies, and even by some of our friends.

The legitimacy of this Congress has, for example, been questioned. It has been said that if culture must be national, surely, to speak of negro-African culture is to speak of an abstraction.

Is it not obvious that the best way to avoid such difficulties is to choose our terms carefully?

I think it is very true that culture must be national. It is however, self-evident that national cultures, however differentiated they may be, are grouped by affinities. Moreover, these great cultural relationships, these great cultural families, have a name: they are called *civilisations*. In other words, if it is an undoubted fact that there is a French national culture, an Italian, English, Spanish, German, Russian, etc., national culture, it is no less evident that all these cultures, alongside genuine differences, show a certain number of striking similarities so that, though we can speak of national cultures peculiar to each of the countries mentioned above, we can equally well speak of a European civilisation.

In the same way we can speak of a large family of African cultures which collectively deserve the name of negro-African culture and which individually reveal the different cultures proper to each country of Africa. And we know that the hazards of history have caused the domain of this civilisation, the locus of this civilisation to exceed widely the boundaries of Africa. It is in this sense, therefore, that we may say that there are, if not centres, at least fringes of this negro-African civilisation in Brazil and in the West Indies, in Haiti and the French Antilles and even in the United States.

This is not just a theory invented for the purposes of the present argument; it is one that is, in my view, implied in a sociological and scientific approach to the problem.

The French sociologist Mauss defined civilisation as "a group of sufficiently numerous and sufficiently important phenomena spread over a sufficiently large number of territories". It may be inferred from this that civilisation tends towards universality and culture towards particularism; that culture is civilisation regarded as peculiar to one people or nation, not shared by any other, and that it indelibly bears the mark of that people or nation. To describe it from the outside, one might say that it is the whole corpus of material and spiritual values created by a society in the course of its history and by values we mean, naturally, elements as diverse as technics and political institutions, things as fundamental as language or as fleeting as fashion, the arts as well as science or religion.

If, on the other hand, one were to define it in terms of purpose, revealing its dynamism, one would say that culture is the effort of any human collectivity to endow itself with the wealth of a personality.

This is tantamount to saying that civilisation and culture define two aspects of the same thing; civilisation defining the widest outskirts of culture, its most external and most general aspects, while culture represents an internal irradiant cell that is the most unique aspect of a civilisation.

It is known that Mauss, in his efforts to find reasons for the compartmentation of the world into clearly defined "civilisation areas", found them in a profound quality that was in his view common to all the social phenomena and which he defined by the term *arbitrary element*. "All social phenomena", he declared, "are to some extent the *work of the collective will*, and when we speak of human will, we infer a *choice* between different possibilities ... It follows from this characteristic of representational collective practices that the area over which they spread, as long as humanity does not constitute a single society, is necessarily finite and relatively fixed".

Thus, all culture is specific. Specific in that it is the work of a single particular will, choosing between different possibilities.

We see where this idea leads.

To take a concrete example; it is indeed true to say that there is a feudal civilisation, a capitalist civilisation, a Socialist civilisation. But it is obvious that on the compost of the same economic pattern, life, the life passion, the *elan vital* of any people gives rise to very different cultures. This does not mean that there is no determinism running from base to superstructure. It means that the relation between base and superstructure is never simple and should never be simplified. In this respect we have the dictum of Marx himself who writes (*Das Kapital*, Vol. III, p. 841 *et seq.*)

"It is always in the immediate relations between the masters of the means of production and the direct producers that we discover the intimate secret, the hidden foundation of the whole social structure. This does not mean that the same economic basis—the same, that is, as regards the main conditions—may not by reason of innumerable distinct empirical conditions, e.g. natural and racial factors, historical influences acting from without, etc., manifest itself in an infinity of variations and graduations that may only be discovered by an analysis of the empirical circumstances concerned".

No better way could be found to say that civilisation is never so special that it does not presuppose, to breathe life into it, a whole constellation of ideational resources, traditions, beliefs, ways of thought, values, a whole intellectual equipment, a whole emotional complex, a fund of wisdom that precisely we call culture.

This, I submit, is what legitimises our present meeting. All who have met here are united by a double solidarity; on the one hand, a *horizontal solidarity*, that is, a solidarity created for us by the colonial, semi-colonial or para-colonial situation imposed upon us from without; and on the other, a vertical solidarity, a *solidarity in time*, due to the fact that we started from an original unity, the unity of African civilisation, which has become diversified into a whole series of cultures all of which, in varying degrees, owe something to that civilisation.

We may accordingly consider this Congress from two points of view, both of them equally valid, namely, that this Congress is a return to the sources, a phenomenon characteristic of all communities in times of crisis, while, it is at the same time an assembly of men who must get to grips with the same harsh reality, hence of men fighting the same fight and sustained by the same hope.

For my part, I can see no incompatibility between the two things. On the contrary, I believe the two aspects to be complementary and that our bearing, which may seem to indicate hesitation and embarrassment between the past and the future, is in fact only natural, seeing that it is inspired by the idea that the shortest way to the future is always one that involves a deep understanding of the past.

I now come to my main theme, namely, the concrete conditions underlying the problem of native cultures at the present day.

I have said that this concrete conditioning may be briefly expressed as the colonial, semi-colonial or para-colonial situation in which these cultures are developing.

The question at once arises: What influences can such conditions have upon the development of these cultures? And first of all, can a political status have cultural consequences? This is not immediately obvious. If one believes with Frobenius that culture is born of man's emotion before the cosmos and that it is no more than "παιδεύμα" then there can be little or no influence of politics upon culture.

Or again, if one holds with Schubart that the essential factor is a geographical one, if one believes that "it is the spirit of the countryside that forges the soul of a people", there can be little or no influence of politics upon culture.

If, however, one believes, as common sense dictates, that civilisation is first and foremost a social phenomenon and the result of social facts and social forces, then the idea that politics can influence culture becomes crystal clear.

This influence of politics upon culture is expressly recognised by Hegel in the *Lessons from the philosophy of history* when he writes this innocent little phrase which Lenin, however, must have considered less innocent than it appears as he quoted it and underlined it twice in the *Philosophical Notebooks*:

"The importance of nature should be neither over- nor under estimated; certainly the gentle sky of Ionia greatly contributed to the grace of the poems of Homer. Nevertheless, it cannot in isolation produce Homers. *Nor does it always produce them. No bard arises under Turkish domination*".

This can mean only one thing, namely, that a political and social system that suppresses the self-determination of a people thereby kills the creative power of that people.

Or, what amounts to the same thing, wherever colonialism has existed, whole peoples have been deprived of their culture, deprived of all culture.

It is in this sense that the historic meeting in Bandung may be said to have been not only a major political event; it was also a cultural event of the first magnitude in that it was the peaceful rising of peoples athirst not only for justice and human dignity but for what colonialism had chiefly denied them, namely, justice.

The mechanism of the death of culture and of civilisations under the colonial system is beginning to be well known. In order to flourish, a culture must have a framework, a structure. Nothing can be surer than that the elements that buttress the cultural life of a colonised people disappear or become debased as a result of the colonial system. I am referring naturally in the first place to political organisation. For it must not be forgotten that the political organisation freely evolved by a people is a significant factor in the culture of that people and, moreover, conditions that particular culture.

Furthermore, there is the question of language. Language has been called "psychology petrified". The native language, the language learnt at school, the language of ideas, once it ceases to be the official and administrative language suffers a loss of status that hinders its development and sometimes threatens its very existence.

We must fully grasp this idea. When the English destroy the state organisation of the Ashantis in the Gold Coast, they deal a blow to Ashanti culture.

When the French refuse to recognise as official languages Arabic in Algeria or Malgache in Madagascar, thus preventing them from achieving their full potentiality in the modern world, they deal a blow to Arab culture and Madagascan culture.

Limitation of the colonised civilisation, suppression or debasement of all that it rests on, how in these conditions can we feel surprised at the suppression of one of the characteristics of all live civilisations, namely the faculty of self-renewal?

It is, we know, a commonplace in Europe to disparage nationalist movements in the colonial countries by representing them as obscurantist forces priding themselves on reviving medieval ways of life and thought. This, however, is to forget that the power to *leave behind the past* is one that belongs to a live civilisation, and that a civilisation is alive when the society in which it finds expression is free. What is happening at present in Africa or in free Asia is, in my view, highly significant in this respect. I shall confine myself to remarking that it is Free Tunisia that has abolished the religious tribunals, not colonial Tunisia, and that it is Free Tunisia that has nationalised Habu properties and abolished polygamy and not the Tunisia of the colonists; that it was the India of the English that maintained the traditional status of the Indian woman, but an India freed from British tutelage that gave the Indian woman equal rights with man.

Let us not delude ourselves! Limited in its action, its dynamism hampered, the civilisation of the colonised society from the first day enters the twilight that is the precursor of the end.

Spengler, in his *Decline of the West*, quotes these lines from Goethe:

"Thus thou must be, no man his face can change.
So saith Apollo, thus the prophet spake
Develop in life the form graven in thee
That neither time, nor king, nor law can break".

The great reproach we may justly level at Europe is that she broke the upsurge of civilisations that had not yet reached full flowering, that she did not permit them to develop and achieve the full richness of the forms graven in them.

It would be superfluous to detail the process by which the death of this whole was accomplished. Suffice it to say that it was stricken at its base. At its base, and thus irretrievably.

We recall the pattern worked out by Marx in respect of the societies of India, namely, small communities that break up because the foreign admixture disrupts their economic pattern. This is only too true. And not only for India. Wherever European colonisation has occurred, the introduction of an economy based on money has led to the destruction or weakening of traditional links, the break-up of the social and economic structure of the community as well as the disintegration of the family. When a member of a colonised people makes this kind of remark, European intellectuals tend to reproach him with ingratitude and to remind him complacently of what the world owes to Europe. In France, one can still remember the impressive picture painted by M. Caillois and M. Béguin, the former in a series of articles entitled "*Reversed Illusions*", the latter in his preface to M. Pannikar's book on Asia. Science history, sociology, ethnography, morals, technics, all are brought in. And what importance, these writers ask, can be attached to a few acts of violence, that were in any case unavoidable, as compared with such a long list of benefits? There is certainly much that is true in this picture. But neither of these gentlemen can persuade world opinion that the great revolution brought about by Europe in the history of humanity is either the introduction of a system based upon respect for human dignity, in spite of all their efforts to make us think so, or the invention of intellectual integrity; this revolution turned upon very different considerations that it would be disloyal not to face, namely, that Europe was the first to have invented and to have introduced everywhere under her sway a social and economic system founded on money and to have mercilessly destroyed everything—I repeat, everything, culture, philosophy, religions,—everything that might prevent or slow down the enrichment of a group of privileged men and peoples. I am well aware that for some time it has been claimed that the evils caused by Europe are not irreparable. It is said that by taking certain precautions, the devastating effects of colonisation could be mitigated. Unesco has been considering the problem and lately (*Unesco Courier*, February 1956), Dr. Luther Evans, the Director General, stated that "in certain conditions technical progress could be introduced into a culture in such a way as to harmonise with it". While a well known ethnographer, Dr. Margaret Mead, declared that if we bear in mind that "every culture forms a logical and coherent whole" and that "the slightest modification of any single element of a culture brings in its train changes in other respects", it should be possible by taking the necessary precautions "to introduce into certain cultures, basic education, new agricultural and industrial methods, new rules of hospital administration, etc., with a minimum of dislocation, or, at least, to make use of the inevitable dislocation for constructive ends".

All this is certainly steeped in good intentions. One must, however, resign oneself to the facts. This is not a case where there might be said to be a bad kind of colonisation destroying native civilisations and attacking the "moral health of the colonised people", and another good kind of colonisation, an enlightened colonisation backed by ethnography, which could integrate the cultural elements of the coloniser within the corpus of the native civilisations harmoniously and without risk of the "moral health of the colonised peoples". One must resign oneself to the facts: the tenses of colonisation are never conjugated with the verbs of the idyllic.

We have seen that all colonisation leads in the longer or shorter run to the death of the civilisation of the conquered society. But can it be said, if the native civilisation dies, that the coloniser replaces

it with another type of civilisation that is superior to the native kind, that is, by the conqueror's own civilisation?

This illusion, to parody a fashionable expression, I propose to call the Deschamps Illusion, after Governor Deschamps who, at the opening of this Congress yesterday morning, pathetically recalled that Gaul had once been colonised by the Romans, adding that the Gauls had not retained too unhappy memories of that colonisation. The Deschamps Illusion is, moreover, as old as Roman colonisation itself and might just as well be called the Rutilius Namatianus Illusion, as I find among Governor Deschamps' ancestors a man who was not Governor but Palace Chamberlain, which is not indeed without some analogy, who in the 5th century A.D. expressed in Latin verse a thought rather similar to that expressed by Monsieur Deschamps yesterday morning in French prose. Naturally such a comparison raises certain problems. One may in particular wonder if the comparison is valid for such widely differing historical situations if, for example, one can compare, on the grounds of colonisation, a pre-capitalist colonisation with a capitalist colonisation. Nor does this absolve us from wondering incidentally whether the position of Governor, or Palace Chamberlain, is one that best qualifies a man to pass impartial judgment on colonialism. However that may be, let us hear what Rutilius Namatianus has to say:

“Fecisti patriam diversis gentibus unam;
Profuit injustis te dominante capi
Dumque offers victis proprii consortia juris
Urbem fecisti quod orbis erat”.

We may note in passing that no poet has ever yet been inspired by the modern colonial system; never has one hymn of gratitude resounded in the ears of modern colonialists. And that in itself is a sufficient condemnation of the colonial system... But no matter. Let us come to the heart of the illusion, namely, that just as in Gaul a Latin culture was substituted for a native culture, so there will occur throughout the world off-shoots of French, English or Spanish civilisations as a result of colonisation. But this, I repeat, is an illusion.

Moreover, the spread of this misunderstanding is not always unconscious or disinterested. In this respect we shall confine ourselves to recalling that in 1930, when a politician like Monsieur Doumer interrupted the historian Berr or the ethnographer Mauss at a meeting of philosophers and historians to define the word civilisation, it was to point out to them the political dangers of their cultural relativism and to insist that the idea that France had a mission to spread “civilisation”—by which he meant French civilisation—to her colonies must not be upset. An illusion, I say, for we must be quite convinced of the opposite, namely, that no colonising country can give its civilisation to any colonised country, that there is not, there has never been and there never will be scattered throughout the world, as was thought in the early days of colonisation, a “New France”, a “New England, or a “New Spain”. This is worth emphasising: a civilisation is a co-ordinated group of social functions. There are technical functions, intellectual functions, and functions of organisation and coordination.

To say that the coloniser substitutes his civilisation for the native civilisation could mean only one thing, namely, that the colonising nation ensures to the colonised, that is to the natives in their own country, the fullest mastery over these different functions.

What, however, does the history of colonisation teach us in this respect? That techniques in colonial countries always develop alongside the native society without the colonised ever being given the chance to master them. (The great misfortune of technical education in all colonial countries

is the attempt by the colonists to bar the way to technical qualifications for native workmen; the attempt that finds its most odious and most radical expression in South Africa is, in this respect, highly significant.) That as regards intellectual functions there is no colonial country of which the main characteristic is not illiteracy and the low level of public education. That in all colonies, as regards the functions of organisation and co-ordination, the political power belongs to the colonial authorities and is directly exercised by the governor or resident-general, or is at least controlled by him.

(This, incidentally, explains the vanity and hypocrisy of all colonial policies based upon integration or assimilation—policies clearly recognised by the native peoples for the snares and booby-traps they are.)

You see the extent of the requirements. I shall sum them up by saying that, for the coloniser, exporting his civilisation to the colonial country would mean nothing less than a deliberate attempt to establish native capitalism, a native capitalist society in the image of and also as a competitor of metropolitan capitalism.

One has only to glance at the facts to realize that nowhere has metropolitan capitalism given birth to native capitalism. Moreover if a native capitalism has not arisen in any colonial country (I do not mean the capitalism of the colonists themselves that is directly connected with metropolitan capitalism), the reasons must not be sought in the laziness of the natives but in the very nature and logic of colonial capitalism.

Malinowski, who is certainly open to criticism from other angles, once had the merit of drawing attention to the phenomenon that he called the “selective gift”.

“The whole conception of European culture as a cornucopia from which all blessings flow freely is fallacious. There is no need to be a specialist in anthropology to see that the “European gift” is always highly selective. We never give, and we never shall give native people living under our domination—as it would be complete madness from the point of view of political realism to do so—the four following elements of our culture:

1. —The instruments of physical power—firearms, bombers, etc. or anything that makes defence effective or aggression possible.
2. —Our instruments of political mastery. Sovereignty always remains the prerogative of the “British Crown”, or the “Belgian Crown” or the French Republic. Even when we practice indirect rule such rule is always exercised under our control.
3. —We do not share the main part of our wealth and our economic advantages with the natives. The metal that comes from the African gold and copper mines never flows along African channels, apart from wages that are in any case always inadequate. Even under a system of indirect economic exploitation such as we practice in Western Africa or in Uganda when we leave a proportion of the profit to the natives, the entire control of economic organisation always remains in the hands of the western enterprise.

Nowhere is full political equality granted. Nor full social equality. Nor even full religious equality. In fact, when we consider all the points just mentioned, it is easy to see that there is no question of “giving”, nor of offering “generously”, but rather of “taking”. We have taken from the Africans their lands and, generally speaking, it is the most fertile lands we have taken. We have bereft tribes of their sovereignty and of the right to make war. We oblige the natives to pay taxes but they do not control, or at least never entirely, the administration of these funds. Finally, the

work they do is never voluntary except in name". (*Introductory essay on the anthropology of changing African cultures*, 1938).

Several years later Malinowski drew the following conclusions in *The dynamics of culture*: "It is the selective gift which, of all the elements of the colonial situation, has perhaps the greatest influence on the process of cultural exchange. What the Europeans refrain from giving is both significant and clearly determined. It is a refusal which tends to nothing less than a withdrawal from the process of cultural contact of all the economic, political and juridical benefits of the superior culture. If power, wealth, and social advantages were given to the natives the cultural change-over would be relatively easy. It is the absence of these factors, our "selective gift", that renders the cultural change so difficult and so complicated".

As we see, there is never any question of the gift being offered in its entirety, hence if there is never any question of a civilisation being offered to others, there can be no question of a transfer of civilisation. Toynbee in *The World and the West* propounds a most ingenious theory of the psychology of the impact of civilisation. He explains that when the ray of civilisation strikes a foreign body "the resistance of the foreign body refracts the cultural ray by decomposing it in the same way as the prism decomposes light rays to produce the colours of the spectrum". He holds that it is, moreover, the resistance of the foreign social body that impedes the total diffusion of one culture in another, causing a kind of purely physical selection by which only the least important and most harmful elements are retained.

The truth is very different; Malinowski is right and Toynbee wrong. The selection of cultural elements offered to the colonised is not the result of a physical law. It is the result of a political decision, the result of a policy deliberately chosen by the colonist, a policy that may be summed up as the import-export of capitalism itself, by which I mean its foundations, its virtues and its power.

But, it may be said, there is still another possibility, namely, the elaboration of a new civilisation, a civilisation that will owe something both to Europe and to the native civilisation. If we discard the two solutions represented, on the one hand, by the preservation of the native civilisation and, on the other, by the export overseas of the colonists' civilisation, might it not be possible to conceive of a process that would elaborate a new civilisation owing full allegiance to neither of its component parts?

This is an illusion cherished by many Europeans who imagine they are witnessing in countries of British or French colonisation the birth of an Anglo- or Franco-African or an Anglo- or Franco-Asiatic civilisation.

In support of it they rely on the notion that all civilisations live by borrowing, and infer that when two different civilisations have been brought into contact through colonisation, the native civilisation will borrow cultural elements from the colonists' civilisation and that from this marriage will spring a new civilisation, a mixed civilisation.

The error inherent in such a theory is that it reposes on the illusion that colonisation is a contact with civilisation like any other and that all borrowings are equally good.

The truth is quite otherwise and the borrowing is only valid when it is counter-balanced by an interior state of mind that *calls* for it and integrates it within the body which then assimilates it so that both become one—what was external becoming internal. Hegel's view applies here. When a society borrows, it takes possession. It acts, it does not suffer action. "In taking possession of the object, the mechanical process becomes an interior process by which the individual *takes possession*

of the object in such a way as to strip it of its separate identity, transform it into a means and impart to it the substance of his own personality". (Hegel, Logic Vol. II, p. 482).

Colonisation is a different case. Here there is no borrowing arising out of need, no cultural elements being spontaneously integrated within the subject's world. And Malinowski and his school are right to insist that the process of cultural contact must be regarded mainly as a continuous process of interaction between groups having different cultures.

What does this mean if not that the colonial situation, that sets the colonist and the colonised in opposing camps, is in the last resort the determining element?

And what is the result?

The result of this lack of integration by the dialectic of need is the existence in all colonial countries of what can only be termed a cultural mosaic. By this I mean that in all colonial countries the cultural features are juxtaposed but not harmonised.

What, however, is civilisation if not a harmony and an integration? It is because culture is not just a simple juxtaposition of cultural features that there cannot be a mixed culture. I do not mean that people who are biologically of mixed blood cannot found a civilisation. I mean that the civilisation they found will be a civilisation only if it is not mixed. It is for this reason too that one of the characteristics of culture is its style, that mark peculiar to a people and a period and which is to be found in all fields in which the activity of a people is manifested at a given period. I feel that Nietzsche's remarks in this respect are worth considering; "Culture is above all a unity of artistic style in all the vital manifestations of a people. To know many things and to have learnt much are neither an essential step towards culture nor a sign of culture and could indeed go hand in hand with the opposite of culture, namely, barbarism, which implies a lack of style or a chaotic mixture of all styles".

No truer description could be given of the cultural situation common to all colonised countries. In every colonised country we note that the harmonious synthesis of the old native culture has been destroyed and has been replaced by a heterogeneous mixture of features taken from different cultures, jostling one another but not harmonising. This is not necessarily barbarism through lack of culture. *It is barbarism through cultural anarchy.*

You may be startled by the word barbarism. But this would be to forget that the great creative periods have always been periods of great psychological unity, periods of *communion*, and that culture does not live intensely or develop except in the presence of a system of common values. Where, on the other hand, society is in dissolution, forms splinter groups and is criss-crossed by a medley of values that are not recognised by the community as a whole, there is room only for a debased style and, in the last resort, for sterility. A further objection is that any culture, no matter how great, or rather the greater it is, is a mixture of extremely heterogeneous elements. We recall the case the case of Greek culture, consisting of Greek elements to which were added Cretan, Egyptian and Asiatic elements. We may even go further and state that in the realm of culture the composite is the rule and the uniform the harlequin's dress. This is a view of which the American anthropologist Kroeber has become the interpreter (*Anthropology*, New York, 1948):

"It is", he writes, "as though a rabbit could be grafted with the digestive organs of a sheep, the respiratory gills of a fish, the claws and teeth of a cat, a few tentacles of an octopus, a further assortment of foreign organs borrowed from other representatives of the animal kingdom, and could not only survive but reproduce itself and prosper. Organically, this is obviously an impossibility, but in the realm of culture it is a very close approximation to what actually takes place".

It is no doubt true that the rule here is heterogeneity. We must however beware; this heterogeneity is not lived as such. In a live civilisation this heterogeneity is lived internally as homogeneity. Analysis may reveal the heterogeneity, but the elements however heterogeneous are lived in the consciousness of the community as *theirs* in the same way as the most typically native elements. The civilisation does not feel the foreign body, for it is no longer foreign. Scientists may prove the foreign origin of a word or a technique nevertheless the community feels that the word or the technique is its own. A process of naturalisation, ascribable to the dialectic of *having*, has taken place. Foreign elements have become mine have passed into my being because I can dispose of them, because I can organise them within my universe, because I can bend them to my uses; because they are at my disposal, not I at theirs. It is precisely the operation of this dialectic that is denied to the colonised people. Foreign elements are dumped on its soil, but remain foreign White man's things! White man's manners! Things existing along side the native but over which the native has no power.

But, it may be asked, once the original unity is broken, is it not possible that the colonised people can reconstitute it and integrate its new experiences, hence its new wealth, with the framework of a new unity, a unity that will not, of course, be the old unity, but a unity nevertheless?

Agreed. But it must be realized that such a solution is impossible under the colonial system because such a mingling, such a commingling, cannot be expected from a people unless that people retains the *historic initiative*, in other terms, unless that people is free. Which is incompatible with colonialism.

Referring back to the previous statement on the dialectic of need, Japan has been able to commingle the traditional elements with those borrowed from Europe and melt them down into a new culture that nevertheless remains Japanese. Japan, however, is free and acknowledges no law but that of her own needs. It should, moreover, be added that such a commingling postulates a psychological condition, namely, historic boldness, self-confidence. This however, is precisely what the coloniser has endeavoured, right from the start, in one thousand and one ways to take away from the colonised.

And here it must be clearly understood that the famous inferiority complex that they are pleased to find in the colonised is not just matter of chance. It has been deliberately created by the coloniser.

Colonisation is a phenomenon that, among other disastrous psychological consequences, involves the following: it raises doubts regarding the concepts on which the colonised could build or rebuild their world. To quote Nietzsche: "Just as earthquakes devastate and ravage towns so that men build their dwellings on volcanic soil with misgivings, so life itself collapses, grows weaker, loses courage when the overthrow of his beliefs robs man of the basis of his security, his peace of mind, his faith in what is enduring and eternal".

This lack of courage to live, this vacillation of the will to live, is a phenomenon often remarked among colonial peoples, the best known case being that of the people of Tahiti, analysed by Victor Segalen in "*Les Immémoriaux*".

Thus the cultural position in colonial countries is tragic. Whenever colonisation occurs, native culture begins to wither. And among the ruins there springs up, not a culture, but a kind of sub-culture, a sub-culture that, because it is condemned to remain marginal as regards the European culture and to be the province of a small group, an "élite", living in artificial conditions and deprived of life-giving contact with the masses and with popular culture, is thus prevented from blossoming into a true culture.

The result is the creation of vast stretches of cultural wastelands or, what amounts to the same thing, of cultural perversion or cultural by-products.

This is the situation which we black men of culture must have the courage to face squarely.

The question then arises: in such a situation, what ought we, what can we, do? Clearly our responsibilities are grave. What can we do? The problem is often summarised as a choice to be made. A choice between native tradition and European civilisation. Either to reject native civilisation as puerile, inadequate, outdated by history, or else, in order to preserve our native cultural heritage, to barricade ourselves against European civilisation and reject it.

In other terms, we are called upon to choose: "Choose between fidelity and backwardness, or progress and renunciation".

What is our reply?

Our reply is that things are not as simple as they seem and that the choice offered is not a valid one. Life (I say life and not abstract thought) does not recognise, does not accept these alternatives. Or rather if these alternatives are offered, life itself will transcend them.

We say that the question does not arise in native society alone that in every society there is always a state of equilibrium between old and new, that it is always precarious, that is it in a constant state of readjustment and that it has in practice to be rediscovered by every generation.

Our societies, our civilisations, our native cultures are not exempt from this law.

For our part, and as regards our particular societies, we believe that in the African culture yet to be born, or in the para-African culture yet to be born, there will be many new elements, modern elements, elements, let us face it, borrowed from Europe. But we also believe that many traditional elements will persist in these cultures. We refuse to yield to the temptation of the *tabula rasa*. I refuse to believe that the future African culture can totally and brutally reject the former African culture. To illustrate what I have just said, let me use a parable. Anthropologists have often described what one of them proposes to call cultural fatigue. The example they quote deserves to be recalled as it is profoundly symbolic. The story, which takes place in the Hawaiian Islands, is as follows: A few years after the discovery of these islands by Captain James Cook, the king died and was succeeded by a young man, Prince Kamehameha II. On being converted to European ideas the young prince decided to abolish the ancestral religion. It was agreed between the new king and the high priest that a great festival should be organised and that during the festival the taboo should be solemnly broken and the ancestral gods repudiated. On the appointed day, at a sign from the king, the high priest hurled himself upon the statues of the god, trampled them underfoot and broke them, while a great cry went up: "The taboo is broken!" Naturally, some years later the people of Hawaii welcomed the Christian missionaries with open arms. The rest of the story is well known, it has passed into history. This is the simplest and clearest example we know of a cultural subversion preparing the way for the enslavement of a people. And I ask, is this renunciation of its past and its culture by a people, is this what is expected of us?

I say distinctly, there will be no Kamehameha II among us!

I believe that the civilisation that has given negro sculpture to the world of art; that the civilisation that has given to the political and social world the original communal institutions such as village democracy, or fraternal age-groups, or family property, which is a negation of capitalism, or so many institutions bearing the imprint of the spirit of solidarity; that this civilisation that, on another plane, has given to the moral world an original philosophy based on respect for life and integration within the cosmos; I refuse to believe that this civilisation, imperfect though it may be, must be annihilated or denied as a pre-condition of the renaissance of the native peoples.

I believe that, once the external obstacles have been overcome, our particular cultures contain within them enough strength, enough vitality, enough regenerative powers to adapt themselves to the conditions of the modern world and that they will prove able to provide for all political, social, economic or cultural problems, valid and original solutions, that will be *valid because they are original*.

In the culture that is yet to be born, there will be without any doubt both old and new. Which new elements? Which old? Here alone our ignorance begins. And in truth it is not for the individual to reply. Only the community can give the answer. We may, however, affirm here and now that *it will be given* and not verbally but by facts and by action.

And this is what finally enables us to define our role as black men of culture. Our role is not to prepare *a priori* the plan of future native culture, to predict which elements will be integrated and which rejected. Our rôle, an infinitely more humble one, is to proclaim the coming and prepare the way for those who hold the answer—the people, our peoples, freed from their shackles, our peoples with their creative genius finally freed from all that impedes them and renders them sterile.

To-day we are in a cultural chaos. Our part is to say: “Free the demiurge that alone can organise this chaos into a new synthesis, a synthesis that will deserve the name of culture, a synthesis that will be a reconciliation and an overstepping of both old and new”. We are here to ask, nay to demand: “Let the peoples speak! Let the black peoples take their place upon the great stage of history!”

Creolization and Nation-Building in the Hispanic Caribbean

Antonio Benítez-Rojo

Using the word *criollo*, 'creole' in English, in discourse concerning the Spanish Caribbean is hardly new. People have been writing uninterruptedly on it since the sixteenth century, when what we presently call the Caribbean was nothing but a dispersed collection of towns and small plantations in the islands of Cuba, Hispaniola, Puerto Rico, and Jamaica, and a few port-towns on the mainland like Veracruz, Nombre de Dios and Cartagena, all of them linked by the Spanish fleets. At that time the term *criollo* was applied to people of European or African origins born in any of those places. Eventually the adjective *criollo* was applied in the Americas to many things, including flora, fauna and cultural expressions.

'Plantation' is also an old word in the Hispanic Caribbean. The first sugar plantations were started up in Hispaniola around the second decade of the sixteenth century. Both Bartolomé de las Casas and Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo tell in their respective histories of the sprouting up of sugar-mills, offering at the same time some interesting data about the industry's beginning. In any case, the Spanish Crown very soon sponsored the development of sugar plantations with loans, debt moratoria, tax exemptions, machinery, technical advice and, above all, authorization for an increase of African slave importation to guarantee their functioning. Regarding the other colonies in the Caribbean that followed the Hispaniola's example, thirty mills are spoken of in Jamaica in 1523, and ten in Puerto Rico. It is also known that toward the second half of the sixteenth century exports from Cuba reached an annual average of 460 tons.¹ Around 1550, with the plantation practice then generalized, the number of slaves in the Antilles exceeded by far that of the white population, a demographic reality that left an indelible mark on the islands' societies and cultures.

Concerning creole rhythms and performances, we have it that in 1573 the Town Government of Havana ordered that all of the free Negroes should be incorporated, with their songs and dances, into the festivals with which Corpus Christi was celebrated. These songs and dances were not totally African nor totally European: they were arrays of cultural fragments in state of creolization, fragments in flux, fragments momentarily put together here and there by different performers according to their desires, interests and capabilities. Even at that early stage, it is not possible to complete a thorough inventory of the many types of creole dances that coexisted then in the Hispanic Caribbean; nor is it possible to find the name of a founding dance, a mother dance, a particular performance that we can invest with the notion of origins. The only thing we can recover from the past is a fractured series of names, such as: *gayumba*, *zambapalo*, *retambo*, *paracumbé*, *cachumba*, *yeyé*, *zarambeque*, *gurrumbé*, *chacóna*, *zarabanda*, *guineo*, *calinga*, *chica*, *yuka*, *chuchumbé* and many others.² It is interesting to note that those early creole dances reached Spain in the last quarter of the sixteenth century and were commented on by Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Quevedo and other Golden-Age writers. Their popularity was so great that the Spanish Inquisition censured them more than once for being indecent.

If I mention these cases, it is only to note that the plantation system, as well as the Creole rhythms and performances, had already provoked important comment in the distant past.

Well, then, what relation do I find between the Caribbean plantation and the phenomenon of creolization? Naturally, first of all, a relation of cause and effect; without the one we would not have the other. But what do I understand by creolization? I will begin by saying that to my way of thinking none of our cultural manifestations is creolized, but is, rather, in a state of creolization. I think that creolization does not transform literature or music or language into a synthesis or anything that could be taken in essentialist terms; furthermore, it does not even lead these expressions into a predictable state of creolization. For me, creolization is a term with which we attempt to explain the unstable states that Caribbean cultural artifacts, continuously transformed by a series of performers, present over time; for me this is not a process – a word that implies forward movement – but a broken series of recurrences, of happenings, whose only law is change. Where does this instability come from? I think that this is the product of the transatlantic plantation system, whose presence covers the map of world history's contingencies, through the great changes in economic discourse to the vast collisions of races and cultures that humankind has seen. This system, in its slow explosion, threw out millions and millions of cultural fragments in the direction of the Caribbean basin; fragments of diverse kinds that, in their endless fall-out, come together in an instant to form a dance step, a linguistic trope, the line of a poem, and afterwards they repel each other to re-form and pull apart once more, and so on. I think that in the coming together and pulling apart of the innumerable fragments that circulate through the Caribbean sociocultural space many kinds of forces are at work. To begin with there is an assortment of competing desires; not simple desires but complex ones which we can relate to anthropological terms like retention, resistance, assimilation, acculturation, enculturation, and so forth. Those desires, of course, are energized in the individual by a variety of interests that respond to several types of needs, that is, social needs, sexual needs, political needs, religious needs, etc. For example, let's take the case of enculturation, which is the process of cultural transmission. In eighteenth-century Africa the initiation curriculum consisted of a whole set of cultural values, tribal religion, myths, philosophy, history, rituals, and other knowledge. This knowledge's purpose was to guarantee the growth of individuals as tribal members and the thorough comprehension of their way of life during passage from pre-puberty to post-puberty.³ However, since initiation practices were not possible in the Caribbean plantation, those in charge of a child's education, generally the child's mother, had to choose – and choosing involves desire – what fragments of the old culture were to be transmitted. And not only that: the child would learn from her about plantation life; that is, a new kind of knowledge that was to act as a survival kit.

But then we have the fact that, coexisting with such deliberate things as desires and interests, there is chance, unpredictability. For example, both the First and Second World Wars – unforeseeable events – played a part in the coming to the fore of African components of Caribbean culture and literature, such as Claude McKay's and Marcus Garvey's works and, later on, the emergence of Aimé Césaire's *Négritude* movement. In my country, Cuba, the arrival of the radio, the victrola, the recording industry and the cinema – also unpredictable events – contributed to the popularity of the son, the rumba, and the conga in the decade of the 1920s. Before then, this kind of music existed only among the Negro population and was not accepted as anything like a national music. The victrola and the radio made it possible for the compositions, songs and rhythms of black people to be listened and danced to in white peoples' homes. Something similar happened in movie houses, since it was customary then to show silent films with live music, and later, with the arrival of talking

pictures, with a musical variety show. Because of these new developments, black people found an unexpected place of coexistence with whites within popular music, a unique space where instead of being marginalized they were recognized and acclaimed; furthermore, they were sought after and paid well for playing at private parties, theatres, dance halls and night clubs.⁴ Now, once these rhythms had been internalized by the majority of Cubans, they in turn contributed to the formation of what was known then as Afro-Cuban culture. In sum, the phenomenon resulting from the interplay of all of these deliberate and unpredictable factors, of this endless give and take, is what years ago Fernando Ortiz called transculturation and today we call creolization.⁵

In any case, as a result of those competing desires and unpredictable events, the early creole dances that we mentioned either served their purpose and disappeared from the social stage – its fragments back again in the cultural flow – or were gradually transformed into different dances. For example, we know for certain that the creole dance called *yuka*, uprooted from the Congo, was transformed by a series of Cuban performers into the dance called rumba. However, we know nothing about the destiny of the dances called *gayumba* and *gurrumbé*, although some of their fragments — let's say, a particular combination of beats or steps — might be playing some kind of role in some present dance.

Now, if we look at this phenomenon in a horizontal way, it will be easy to understand its nation-building potential. I will begin by acknowledging a type of early Hispanic Caribbean culture that I will identify as '*criollo* culture'.⁶ A culture that, if it does indeed express a wish to differentiate itself from things Spanish, yet manifests itself before the formation of a national culture. Therefore, all the creole dances with funny names that I have mentioned belong to this type of culture. In general, *criollo* culture first began to appear roughly between 1575 and 1625 in different cities and towns. Their principal agents of dissemination were the *criollos*, both whites and blacks, particularly those of the second and third generations. In its formation several factors, of a geographic, demographic, socio-economic, ethnological and political nature, play a role. In any case, the fact that I wish to stress is that in its final stage of development, upon the appearance of alliances between the localities within a given socio-economic region, *criollo* culture goes from being an exclusively local system to one that has a regional character. This regionalization ought not to be seen as a synthesis of local cultures, but rather – I repeat – as an alliance within which there prevail cultural artifacts that were first assembled in different localities.

Toward the end of the eighteenth century, when a national feeling emerged throughout the Spanish colonies, the Creole population that lived in those regions began to feel itself to be Cuban, Dominican or Puerto Rican, though without giving up certain cultural traits that it had acquired as much in the region as in the locality in which it lived. Thus, today, a Cuban or a Puerto Rican feels himself or herself to be precisely such, but, at the same time, he or she keeps certain characteristics of the region and even of the locality in which he or she grew up. From this we can infer that any national culture is a very complex system of competing differences, and so the scheme that I am putting forth should be taken only as something pointing toward a discussion much more serious in both depth and breadth.

For example, to go into detail a little, one must keep in mind that in the formation of *criollo* culture there enter components in state of creolization that have been originally brought by the colonizer, such as the Spanish language, the Catholic religion and the epistemes of medieval and renaissance Spain; components taken from indigenous cultures – of great utility to the conquistadores during their process of adapting to the land – such as things relative to the local flora, fauna, agriculture, minerals, food, lodging, and artifacts unknown in Europe, like *bohíos*, hammocks and canoes;

African components brought by the different captive peoples, such as beliefs, myths, rhythms, dances, oral literature, pantomimes, forms of association, and a predilection for certain foods like plantains, root vegetables and rice. On the other hand, it is also important to consider several differentiating factors arising in the colonial world, such as ethnicity, class, gender, age, place of residence, education, and occupation.

Now, let's see how this scheme worked out in the case of Cuba. In around 1550 the population of Cuba living in towns amounted to 3,300: 1,500 Spaniards, 1,000 Indians and 800 slaves.⁷ This means that, given the scant number of European women who traveled to the island in those years, the first generation of *criollos* was characterized by its ethnic pluralism. Diego de Sarmiento, Cuba's bishop, testified to this when he says that he baptized many mestizo and mulatto children. In any case, the population of Cuba had quintupled by the beginning of the seventeenth century, oscillating between 15,000 and 20,000 inhabitants, more than half of whom lived in Havana. At that time there were two cities and seven towns in the island, distributed in two socio-economic regions; in the west Havana, Guanabacoa, Sancti Spiritus, Trinidad and El Cayo; in the east, Santiago de Cuba, El Cobre, Baracoa, Bayamo and Puerto Principe (now Camagüey).⁸

The western region was controlled by Havana, the residence of the governor and the bishop, and the only port authorized for trade with Seville. The city had begun to grow rapidly after 1543. In that year it was decided that the two fleets making the transatlantic crossing (one from Veracruz, the other from Cartagena and Nombre de Dios), should unite in its excellent bay to undertake the annual return trip in a single convoy. Given that the fleets' stay lasted three or four months, Havana had a guaranteed 'tourist season' every year, having to provide lodging, food and entertainment to no fewer than five thousand people, an exorbitant number for those times. Naturally, the new commercial situation increased the risk of pirate attacks, since the fleets were loaded with precious metals extracted on the continent. Thus, the city began to convert itself into a strong point, its fortresses constructed with slave labour. At the same time, in addition to exporting tobacco, hides and wood, Havana began to export sugar in growing quantities, which sealed its fate as a sugaring and slaveholding city. Nonetheless, given that the Spanish law allowed the slaves to buy their freedom, the number of free Negroes began to grow slowly but perceptibly. Toward the end of the sixteenth century the first African *cabildos* sprang up, which were associations of a cultural nature that brought together blacks according to what part of Africa they came from. These *cabildos* elected their "kings" and "queens," and they had their meetings and cultural activities in their own houses and lands.⁹ Later on, the participation of the blacks of Havana and its environs would be extended to the festivity of the *Día de Reyes*, the Epiphany, where the slaves enjoyed a day of freedom to celebrate their dances and pantomimes in the streets of the city, even dressing in their particularized folk costumes.¹⁰ At the end of the seventeenth century a hermitage dedicated to the Virgin of Regla was built on the other side of the bay, which would prove to have great cultural importance: the image would begin to be adored simultaneously as a Catholic virgin and as the *orisha* Yemaya – Olokun, lady of the sea in the Yoruba pantheon and a key figure in Cuban *santería*; very soon she was elevated to Havana's patron saint.¹¹ In addition to the Yoruba influence, the *criollo* culture of the region was influenced by other African cultures, in particular those brought by slaves from the Congo and from the Calabar coast. Nevertheless, African traditions were never well received by the colonial power. For example, in 1687 it was prohibited for slaves to attend certain *cabildos* in places outside the city's wall, and they were told to celebrate their dances and songs in the city's streets and before the call to prayer; violaters of this ordinance would receive two hundred lashes in public.¹² In fact, the African presence in Havana was always regulated by the power structure. It is possible

to document through the course of more than three hundred years an entire historical record of prohibitions, persecutions and even confiscations of musical instruments. The city, as I said, was the cradle of the plantation system, and even the *criollo* producers would remain at the mercy of the royal monopolies in things related to export commerce as well as to the importation of slaves.

The social and economic development of the eastern region was different from Havana's. This difference was motivated by the absence of free trade, since the eastern producers, kept from exporting anything via any port than Havana, had to pay for costly shippings and run many risks along the bad roads that went between the two regions. Naturally, this situation made it inevitable that, in violation of Spanish laws, the eastern *criollos* would take up contraband. With the gold from the mines and rivers exhausted, the region's economy transformed itself from one based on mining to a livestock-raising one, specializing in the export of hides through French, English and Dutch merchants. Keep in mind that in that period leather was as useful as plastic is today; many objects were partially or totally made of leather, from boots to wineskins, from furniture to saddles and belts. Furthermore, the jerked beef, lard and bacon derived from the killing of livestock were sold at a good price to the merchants of the powers that rivalled Spain, since at that time they hadn't acquired colonies of their own in the region in which their ships might get provisions. In any case, both in livestock raising and in its continuous intercourse with foreign ships, this region was drifting apart from Havana. Also, in the western part of the neighbouring island of Hispaniola there existed a similar situation with respect to Santo Domingo, the only port authorized for commerce. So that the inhabitants of the western part (now Haiti) also developed an economy based on livestock intended for contraband trade. Given the closeness of the two islands – the crossing over the Windward Passage could be made in one night – the *criollos* of one region and the other became one big family with common interests, such as free trade, and with very similar local and regional cultures. In fact, we can speak of a Windward Passage culture that included the northwest part of Jamaica before this island was invaded by the English. What merchandise did the towns acquire through their smuggling? Everything that the commercial monopoly made inaccessible to the *criollos*, either because of its high price or its scarcity in Spain: fabrics, porcelain, metal objects, firearms, even furniture and hats, but above all slaves brought directly from Africa. Thus, in a few years, the population of these isolated lands began to dress in a singular manner, combining the fabrics and fashions of England, France and Holland; at the same time there were, covering their tables, tablecloths from Holland, English plates and pitchers, and French knives. What did they read? Hispaniola's chronicles speak of "heretical" bibles and all sorts of forbidden books translated into Spanish by Jews in Flanders. At the same time, the customs were more flexible, and every time that a merchant ship arrived, fairs and festivals were organized. But perhaps the most important difference from Havana had the slave as its centre. Given that the production of sugar and the construction of fortresses required a forced labour discipline, racial tensions in the Havana area were much sharper than in the eastern region, whose livestock-growing economy made it so that many slaves lived under a patriarchal slave system. Thus, the Negro was here a much more important acculturating agent than in Havana, since he could make mixed marriages more easily and his presence within *criollo* society was considerably more active. I think that all of these cohesive factors influenced the eastern region's becoming organized culturally earlier and its having a higher degree of creolization than Havana's.¹³

Now I'll give some examples of cultural artifacts, still in a state of creolization, that went beyond their regional boundaries and joined the system of Cuba's national culture. The first religious image made in Cuba (1610) owes its existence to the artisans of Havana; it was St Bárbara's, who was

taken up quickly by people of Yoruba origins as a representation of Shango, a noted male *orisha* in the Yoruba pantheon. It should come as no surprise that St Bárbara, a woman, has been identified with Shango, the essence of masculinity. Keep in mind that St Bárbara's image is represented by the attributes of a red cloak (Shango's colour), a gold crown (according to Yoruba tradition, Shango was king of Oyo), a golden chalice in one hand and a sword in the other (Shango likes wine and is a warlike *orisha*); furthermore, St Bárbara, patron saint of artillerymen and protectress of explosions and lightning, presented a parallel to Shango, the lord of fire, lightning and thunder. This case provides an excellent example of creolization. First, we can imagine one or more Yoruba persons staring at St Bárbara's image and establishing its symbolic likeness to Shango, an action that involves desire; then we can think of one of those persons – whom I prefer to call a performer – placing on its Yoruba altar a printed image of St Barbara; then, immediately after, we have the emergence of *santería*: that is, the coming together of a Yoruba *orisha* and a Catholic saint thanks to the phenomenon of creolization.

Now I'll mention two examples related to food. The first one is a national dish called *moros y cristianos* (Moors and Christians). It consists of rice, originally brought from Spain, and black beans, which were brought to Havana from Mexico, possibly in the eighteenth century. The second one are corn tamales, also imported from Mexico although havanized – if you allow me the word – in being filled with pork.

As far as popular theatre is concerned, the Negroes' pantomimes assumed great importance in Havana thanks to the festival of the *Día de Reyes*, January 6, when the city slaves were allowed to perform in the city's streets and squares. The best known of them was the dance of "killing the snake," a sacrificial pantomime of Bantu origins in which the slaves danced and sang in Spanish around an artificial snake and finally simulated the killing of the animal.¹⁴ Various snake-killing songs have been collected, and one of them, anonymously composed in the seventeenth century, inspired Nicolás Guillén to write his well-known poem "Sensemayá." Another snake-killing song, collected by Fernando Ortiz, plays a crucial role in Alejo Carpentier's novel *Concierto barroco* (Baroque Concert). Furthermore, several of these snake-killing songs were selected by José Lezama Lima as part of his *Antología de la poesía cubana*; that is, they transcended its local boundaries and joined Cuba's national literature.

Coming from Cuba's eastern region we have numerous examples. I'll mention just a few. The first *criollo* dish is called *ajiaco*, a kind of *pot-pourri* composed of cassava, sweet potato, pumpkin, corn, chili, *malanga* (indigenous components); pork and jerked beef (European components); plantain and yam (African components). This dish, which was already popular in the sixteenth century, provides an excellent example of creolization.¹⁵ There is another dish called *congrí*, which is basically rice and kidney beans with bacon. It disembarked on the docks of Santiago de Cuba at the turn of the eighteenth century; it came with the refugees of the Haitian Revolution and later on was creolized in Cuba. It managed to keep much of its French name, originally *congo riz*. The same French refugees also brought their Creole music with them, particularly a rhythmic cell that we call *cinquillo* in Cuba. This syncopated sequence of five beats eventually got into the Cuban country dance and later on gave shape to what we call the habañera beat: ta-ta-tat/tata.¹⁶

But then, of course, the most important contribution of the eastern part of the island is the cult of the Virgin of la Caridad, a Catholic–Yoruba cult that simultaneously locates in the virgin the images of Our Lady and the *orisha* Oshun. According to local tradition, the virgin's dark-skinned image appeared at the beginning of the seventeenth century to three men, two white and one black, known as the three Juans. Her prominence grew steadily through the centuries and, in

1916, a group of distinguished Negro veterans of the War with Spain (1895–98) asked the Pope to designate her as Cuba's patron saint. The Pope granted this request immediately, perhaps not knowing that to many Cubans the Virgin of la Caridad was the Oshun of *santería*.¹⁷ So, in the 1920s, while the so-called black music was making its impact on other cultural forms, *santería* legitimized itself along with Catholicism as a national religion, having an influence also on music, painting, dance, theatre, literature, and even on language – for example, words of African origin like *chébere*, *ashé*, *mayombe*, *bembé*, *ebbó*, *ekobio*, *babalawo*, *asere*, *íreme*, *orisha*, *monina*, *bilongo*, *nganga*, and many others, started to be used during those years. Why was her cult so successful? Because the Virgin protectress of the three Juans was a symbol, an icon, that carried a desire for ethnic integration within the space of the nation. Needless to say, what fuelled the phenomenon of creolization here was the existence of this common social desire. Eventually, as I said, the dark-skinned Virgin of la Caridad would turn out to be the patron saint of Cuba, displacing a white-skinned madonna from the Havana area; she would contribute decisively to the Cuban nation's integration in many ways, particularly during the wars against Spanish rule, and after independence she would appear in a kind of patriotic installation along with the Cuban flag, the coat of arms, the images of the founding fathers, the map of the island and the national anthem; moreover, she is still is and ever will be in a state of creolization.

Notes

1. Eric Williams, *From Columbus to Castro: The History of the Caribbean* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 27.
2. On early Creole dances, see Fernando Ortiz, *La Africanía de la Música Folklórica de Cuba* (Havana: Ministerio de Education, 1950); also Alejo Carpentier, *La Música en Cuba* (Mexico City: Fondo de Culture Económica, 1946), translated as *Music in Cuba*, tr. Alan West-Durán, ed. and intro. Timothy Brennan (Minneapolis and London: Cultural Studies of the Americas 5, University of Minnesota Press, 2001).
3. For a comprehensive definition of enculturation, see *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1990), vol. 18:2; vol. 24:725.
4. On the impact of the victrola and the radio in Cuba, see Cristóbal Díaz Ayala. *Música Cubana: Del Areíto a la Nueva Trova* (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1993).
5. See Fernando Ortiz, *Contrapunteo Cubano del Tabaco y el Azúcar* (Havana: Jesús Montero, 1940).
6. On *criollo* culture, see Antonio Benítez-Rojo, 'La Cultura Criolla en Cuba,' *Actual: Revista de la Direction General de Cultura de la Universidad de los Andes* 30 (1955).
7. Leví Marrero, *Cuba, Economía y Sociedad*, vol. 2 (Madrid: Playor, 1973), 325.
8. Marrero, *Cuba, Economía y Sociedad*, 35–40.
9. On Afro-Cuban *cabildos*, see Fernando Ortiz, *Los Cabildos Afrocubanos* (Havana: Universal, 1921).
10. Fernando Ortiz, *La Fiesta Afrocubana del "Día de Reyes"* (Havana: El Siglo XX, 1925).
11. On the *orisha* Yemaya, see Lydia Cabrera, *Yemayá y Ochún* (Miami: Chicherekú, 1980).
12. Marrero, *Cuba, Economía y Sociedad*, 175.
13. Antonio Benítez-Rojo, 'From the Plantation to the Plantation,' in *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*, ed. Benítez-Rojo, tr. James E. Maraniss (Durham, NC and London: Duke UP, 1992/rev. ed. 1996), 33–81.
14. On the dance of 'killing the snake,' see Fernando Ortiz, *La Fiesta Afrocubana del "Día de Reyes."*
15. On the *ajiaco*, see Fernando Ortiz, 'Los Factores Humanos de la Cubanidad,' *Revista Bimestre Cubana* 45, no. 2 (1940).
16. On the *cinquillo*, see Alejo Carpentier, *La Música en Cuba*.
17. For extensive historical information about the Virgin of la Caridad, see Olga Portuondo Zúñiga, *La Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre: Símbolo de Cubanía* (Santiago de Cuba: Editorial Oriente, 1995).

Works Cited

- Benítez-Rojo, Antonio. 1955. La Cultura Criolla en Cuba. *Actual: Revista de la Dirección General de Cultura de la Universidad de los Andes* 30.
- . *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*, trans. James Maraniss, *La Isla Que se Repite: El Caribe y la Perspectiva Posmoderna*, 1989, trans. 1992. Durham NC & London: Duke UP, 1996.
- Cabrera, Lydia. 1980. *Yemayá y Ochún*. Miami: Chicherekú.
- Carpentier, Alejo. 1974. *Concierto Barroco*. Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno Editores.
- . 2001. *La Música en Cuba* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1946). *Music in Cuba*, trans. Alan West-Durán, ed. and intro. Timothy Brennan. Minneapolis and London: Cultural Studies of the Americas 5, University of Minnesota Press.
- Diáz Ayala, Cristóbal. 1993. *Música Cubana: Del Areíto a la Nueva Trova*. Miami: Ediciones Universal.
- Lezama Lima, José, ed. 1965. *Antología de la Poesía Cubana*. Havana: Consejo Nacional de Cultura.
- Marrero, Leví. 1973. *Cuba, Economía y Sociedad*. Madrid: Playor.
- Ortiz, Fernando. 1950. *La Africanía de la Música Folklórica de Cuba*. Havana: Ministerio de Educación.
- . 1921. *Los Cabildos Afrocubanos*. Havana: Universal.
- . 1940. *Contrapunteo Cubano del Tabaco y el Azúcar*. Havana: Jesús Montero.
- . 1940. Los Factores Humanos de la Cubanidad. *Revista Bimestre Cubana* 45, no. 2.
- . 1925. *La Fiesta Afrocubana del "Día de Reyes."* Havana: El Siglo XX.
- Portuondo Zúñiga, Olga. 1995. *La Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre: Símbolo de Cubanía*. Santiago de Cuba: Editorial Oriente.
- Williams, Eric. 1970. *From Columbus to Castro: The History of the Caribbean*. New York: Harper & Row.

The Battle for Space

Rex Nettleford

Creative artists, intellectuals, cultural agents in the Caribbean are today particularly concerned with what I have come to call the battle for space. The phenomenon turns on just about everything that informs the struggle to make sense of Caribbean existence whether one views this from the point of politics, economics, social development or cultural dynamics.

I am reminded of this matter of space by the Caribbean's own ancestral resort to maronnage – retreats into safe psychic sanctums calling on inner reserves beyond the reach of external violators. The Indian seers saw the phenomenon in marvellously dialectical terms.

'As far, indeed, as the vast space outside, extends the space within the heart. Within it, indeed, are contained both heaven and earth, fire and wind, sun and moon, lightning and the stars, both what one possesses here and what one does not possess – all is contained in SPACE.'

The concept of inner and outer space conjures up in the mind of the Caribbean person a number of ideas about his existential reality. Centuries of marginalisation will have placed him on the periphery of existence, taunting him to great expense of energy in a bid to enter a 'mainstream' not of his making, rather than attributing to him, as human being, the capacity for participating in the determination of that mainstream. The dichotomy between his inner space and outer space is a function of his alienation, his balkanised consciousness, of a disparateness of elements which go to make the human whole, of an impotence that renders him all but totally out of control of his own destiny. The all-pervasive nature of this marginalisation – the denial to the individual man and woman of the harmonisation of inner and outer space – is manifest in myriad and mutually reinforcing but dichotomous and discrete phenomena in social relationships. These phenomena are variously described as master/slave, management/labour, bourgeois/low culture, superordinate/subordinate.

Happily, none of these 'relationships' is static since human nature (still to be fathomed and understood in its entirety) gives to social interaction a certain dynamic, known in some quarters as dialectical. This opens up to the marginalised opportunities for spatial options that would otherwise be denied. In the Caribbean world where colonial dependency, superordinate/subordinate, powerful/powerless categories determined social reality from its modern beginnings dating back at least four centuries, such dialectical relationships have been central to human existence as a matter of course. The ensuing battle for space, in both an elemental and physical sense, constitutes, then, the *force vitale* of a still groping society. To this day the phenomenon of numerical majorities functioning as cultural and power minorities persists in the Commonwealth or Anglophone Caribbean² despite the disappearance of the British Raj, the coming of the one-man-one-vote principle, and the strident rhetoric aspiring to participatory democracy.

Modern Indian experience shares some of this contradiction. Except that the ancestral reality of an India that antedates the coming of the British Raj suggests quicker and more effective

liberation out of colonial space. I view the strong cultural renaissance of contemporary India in its philosophical, intellectual and artistic assertive vitality not only as the recovery of its inner space but as the necessary condition for the occupation of that outer space demanded by the fact of post-colonialism, the imperatives of development and entry into the 21st century seen as the fulfilment of Western science and technology. More important I see the recovery of inner space by ancestral civilisations like those of India and part of Black Africa as the necessary control over the awesome and dynamic process of harmonisation of inner space discovered and outer space to be effectively occupied. The strength and certitude of ancestral centres of psychic and cultural power have a logical priority for the grasp of and command over the wonders of high tech modernity. The story of the Green Revolution and the science and technology capability of India are the pride of all the Third World. However, I make bold to say that Rajiv Gandhi and his fervent thrust into modernity could make no sense without the ancestral wisdom of Tagore.

We in the contemporary Caribbean can make no sense in our craving after Western-type prosperity without the ancestral wisdom of our people honed in half a millenium of unique historical experience characterised by severance (uprooting from ancestral lands), suffering and survival. Each of these states of experience defines some sense of space or other. The severance was from Africa (in its violent uprooting with all the consequences of such involuntary uprooting), from Europe (peaceful and benign for the most part but with the supporting mechanisms of that sense of power and superior military and industrial technology), and later from India and China (admittedly without the traumas of physical enforcement but with the anguish of economic dispossession and psychic displacement).

The suffering was in turn an abuse of human space – in terms of deprivation of human beings of that sense of self or of society. The slave suffered on the one hand from social death and natal alienation.³ On the other he was deprived of that universal claim to that one last area of the psyche that is deemed to be inviolable.

Free will, the capacity for rational choice, moral responsibility or natural rights have existed, however, under constant threat of obliteration whether under slavery, indentureship, class oppression or colonialism. The exploitation of man by man proceeds by various means (physical torture, social control, psychological conditioning) but with the same effect – the abuse or denial of personal space. This was a normal feature of Caribbean life under slavery and colonialism and continues, albeit in modified and subtle form(s), in Independence with the new perpetrators to be found among the native governors, the mimic men, and/or the neo-colonial superpowers brought in as allies in pursuit of hegemonic control of geographical spheres.

The US penetration of the Caribbean Basin by way of political, military, intellectual, economic and telecommunications means in a latter-day version of the age-old attack on the space of the Caribbean people is likely to perpetuate the 'suffering' of dependency and powerlessness. *Power* in its elemental sense has less to do with the possession of so many nuclear warheads and ballistic missiles and more to do with the capacity to generate the knowledge that underlies the production of those very warheads and missiles. The capacity to make definitions about oneself and to follow through with action on the basis of those definitions is the substance of power. It expressed the capability for integration of inner space, conceived as the capacity to generate knowledge and to create, and outer space perceived as the follow-through to action on the basis of such thought, knowledge and creativity.

The Caribbean people are in search of that power now. Something called Independence has recently come to the Anglophone section of the region comprising some 15 countries.⁴ It is

decked out in national flags, anthems and symbols (from flowers to heroes). However, the actual redistribution, relocation and determining of who should administer power among the native (and foreign) contenders for that power remains a fact of life. The battle for space continues – between the mass of the population and an oligarchic few who would wish to freeze their current occupation of political and economic space into timeless legitimacy. In addition, the battle is also between the region as a whole (in its self-perception as a member of the Third World) and the powerful North Atlantic complex which has realigned itself into the omnipotent OECD group of countries, the World Bank or the IMF. With such monumental power concentrated in outer space, Caribbean countries have had to fall back on themselves, their self-reliance, their innate self-confidence, their logically prioritised area of 'inner space'.

In this there are lessons to be learnt from the experience within the society itself which has a tradition of slaves, colonials, the working class, and the poor retreating into their inner space as strategy of demarginalisation. Oriental philosophy is supposed to attribute to mind and imagination, creative power. But it is the phenomenon of marginalisation in the experience and existential reality of the Occidental Caribbean that has done exactly this. One, however, takes note of the journey to Oriental transcendental meditation by the alienated in the developed Western world.

In the Caribbean, mind and imagination – creative intellect and artistic creation – have been major ingredients in the Caribbean's battle for space in the first place and in the other, in the region's efforts to 're-integrate' self and society into an organic totality by the harmonisation of inner and outer space. We in the Caribbean have not built pyramids, pillars, cathedrals, amphitheatres, opera houses etc that are the wonders of the world, but we have more creative artists per square inch than is probably good for us. In addition we have created and are creating mental structures which are intended to be the basis of that self-confidence, that sense of place, purpose and power without which there can be no integration of inner and outer space. Music, dance, religious expression, language, literature, appropriate designs for social living are the structural products of the Caribbean's creative impulse. They serve as guarantees of inner space meeting outer space in a dynamic existence that turns on creative rather than disintegrative tension.

This phenomenon is best described by the phrase inward stretch outward reach, neither of which activity is possible without a sense of space. The battle for space in the Caribbean has found its fiercest expression in the indigenising process of a society that is wholly the creature of colonial transplantation and the impulse of commercial profit. For most of that existence the battle has found most cogent form in the struggle of the African presence to claim a place of centrality in the Caribbean ethos. The Eurocentricity of mainstream Caribbean life for all this time is the problematique of cultural development. The very notion of Eurocentricity is a spatial concept. Its manifestations in concrete terms are in the primacy of systems of law, constitutional frameworks, education, dress, diet, language, religion, kinship patterns, artistic manifestations, politics, economics and technology. The European imperial raj displaced from their ancestral space the subject peoples brought there. There are, however, residual areas of inviolability left to the human being, however total the attempt at displacement by domination, fear or psychological conditioning, might have been.

The Caribbean has long found these areas of inviolability to lie in the exercise of the mind and the creative imagination. These became the sacred groves, the caves of the heart, the inner landscapes, the metaphors of actual living which form the very essence of culture. The Caribbean is in every sense a cultural expression. Three particular areas spring to mind. They are language,

religion and the creative arts. They circumscribe the inner spaces beyond the reach of oppressors; they constitute the 'innate structures' that are the monopoly of no one race, no one civilisation, no one world power. Consciousness of the existence and power of such innate structures provide the wings to liberation rather than for retreat into myth.

On language, one's cosmology can be expressed in one's own language without resort to the master's tongue. Even when the master's tongue continues to spell scribal legitimacy, the lexicon is utilised but transmuted by the force of native syntax, tone and significations as well as rhythm. The Caribbean is today a rich laboratory of Creole languages – 'creole' in the proper sense of native-born and native-bred and not in the sense of an aberration of a dialect to the norm of a Standard tongue⁵. The very code-switching, so normal to Caribbean people in the liberal use of creole for appropriate circumstances transformed to the lingua franca as the occasion demands (sometimes in one sentence), is a sign of the capacity to master the flow between inner and outer space on one level. English may be the lingua franca in the Anglophone Caribbean for the dialogue with outer space (read the wider world, 'mainstream Western culture') but Jamaica Talk and patois are the languages of everyday living. Dutch, Spanish and French in the rest of the region may govern but it is srnan tonga, papiamentu, patois etc, that rule. When the 'governors' of outer space and the 'rulers' of inner space are truly integrated, linguistic wholeness will be achieved. The integration does not come only by the replacement of one or the other. It comes as much by the acceptance of linguistic pluralism rooted in mutual respect for the legitimacy, inner logic and consistency of each. Until that comes, and it has not yet come in the Caribbean, the battle for space continues.

It continues no less in the field of religion in which the Caribbean has never been short of expressions. In the battle for space between Europe and Africa on foreign soil, syncretised expressions have emerged as synthesis for survival among the mass of the population. To go *beyond survival* is to achieve reintegration of inner and outer space into organic totality. In effect these syncretised forms which are relegated to the world of marginalised life (subculture) must now battle for place and purpose with orthodox Christianity. The tyranny of distance between 'subculture' religion and 'high culture' Christianity continues to be defied by the inward stretch and outward reach of a group like the Rastafarians.⁶ By a skilful reinterpretation of the Old Testament, the group has invented a cosmology consonant with the Black man's search for dignity and identity in a space (the Western world) which has for centuries defined itself in terms of the inherent superiority of the Caucasoid races and the corresponding inferiority of inhabitants of elsewhere especially the Dark Continent. The spatial liberation from down under, or from periphery to centre (I-and-I), challenges some basic tenets of the Christian belief system which confines divinity to an historical figure and attributes to Man the affliction of Original Sin to be redeemed by the Crucified One. To the Rastafarians any Original Sin that was committed was committed *against* the Black man and not *by* him. He holds himself subject to no such self-humiliation and protects his self-dignity ferociously. He is in fact divine. *All* men are divine and with a piece of God within, the basis is provided for genuine equality among all men, for universal brotherhood. Outer space is reintegrated with inner space by the claim of divinity. All men are created equal, *are* equal. This is the only true basis for any design for civilised social living. No pyramid, temple, edifice of grandeur can be more wondrous than this which safeguards and celebrates the magnificence of the greatest structure of all structures – the human being. The human body in Rastafarian parlance is termed 'the structure'.

One's body is, after all, one's own. It belongs to no one else and what it creates out of its mind and imagination, is a source of power. The arts of the imagination and the system of thought

provide the routes to independence, to spatial definitiveness and on one's own terms.

It is in this sense that music and dance provide the Caribbean with two of the most effective weapons in the battle for space. Sound and movement are the life-making abstractions beyond the reach of external domination. A Government bans the lyrics of a song. It can never really ban the tune. If lyrics are bawdy and subversive, the tune is the tune – deceptively harmless! Limitless options in the permutations of sound values suggest a command over the use of space. The calypso of Trinidad, the rumba of Cuba, the reggae of Jamaica have jumped out of the specificity of their geographical environments, from the carnival tents of Port of Spain, the mambo temples of Havana and the anguished urban ghettos of Kingston, into the universality of popular music all over the globe, appealing to the young on all continents and from different cultural backgrounds. This conquest of outer space serves to demarginalise the Caribbean in the way that the sitar has demarginalised India in the world of 'serious' music. Ravi Shankar, Bob Marley, the Mighty Sparrow belong to the world, not to their native lands anymore.

As with music, so with dance. The oppressed of the Caribbean have always danced. Coupled with music and performed in the context of religious ritual, the dance assumed elemental proportions affording contemporary use of the creative imagination and as invaluable sources of energy in the continuing battle for space. Caribbean dance-theatre becomes a means of revitalisation, of integrating inner and outer space in the sense that it is seen to serve as route to self-confidence that underpins the creation of one's own destiny in modern life. Dance-theatre draws on such energies for definition and further discovery. It is to the rituals, the songs and stories, the legends, the history, contemporary social life, the rhythm, the sounds, the physical landscape, the ambience of existence that Caribbean dance-theatre turns for impulse and growth. In carving designs in space (which is what dance does through time and in rhythm) Caribbean dance-theatre enters the traditional battle for space by seeking to contribute to bringing the African presence to the centre of the Caribbean ethos. This in itself implies transformative powers of dance bringing an entire society to terms with itself, interpreting an entire society to itself and challenging an historically dependent entity to originality and self-definition in terms of its own realities.

The African continuities are here critical; their transculturation into creolised Caribbean forms no less so. The centrality of the Earth, of sculpted moulded form as against the attenuated linearity of European art-dance is emphasised, but even in this the battle for space persists. European classical ballet is projected as the Standard and all other forms, dialects of it. One Black American artistic director once insisted that even a stripper is a better stripper for having studied European classical ballet. Caribbean dance-theatre responding to the reality of the African presence must be conscious of the suppleness of the spine, the arched back, the 'groundedness' of the body in motion, the setting up of different rhythms simultaneously in axial comfort. From the simple walk to the most vigorous of contortions the control of small areas of space with the implosion of energy in the inner space gives to Caribbean dance-forms its own kinesthetic quality.

The carriage of the arms still seen in everyday life throughout the region puts energy in the elbows – bearing weight on the head, resting akimbo in repose – and has no counterpart in the 'port de bras' of academic European classical ballet. The giving into Mother Earth the source of all life, the rotation or contraction-release of the pelvis another source of all life, the extension of the body by the use of masks to suggest power through space – such are the elements that persist in the rituals, African-derived, in the Caribbean. They are quite properly the source of our dance-theatre.⁷

Thus are the belief systems of ancestor worship, of life as a cycle of those dead, living and yet unborn, of the divine powers or spirits that mount the devotees in ritual to be acted or danced out

as if to link the inner with the outer space, the imagined with the real, the body with the spirit. Caribbean dance-theatre draws on the strength of such ancestral forces to inform contemporary life. Rituals are not transposed from natural habitats: that's anthropology. They are instead distilled to transform contemporary life into altered states of consciousness to offer the Caribbean being a sense of place and purpose.

Is that asking too much of the dance? Perhaps! However, as instrument of integration between worlds of inner and outer space, of spiritual psychic experience and physical reality it offers an excellent environment for self-fulfilment. Empirical evidence is in support of this claim. The physical environment itself is a source of energy. 'The arms, like other parts of the body must be able to describe the curve of mountains, of swans and the shapes of Gothic cathedrals, skyscrapers, and pine trees piercing the winter sky have found correspondences in dance attitudes.'⁸

For the wider contemporary society in search of itself, the dance is as good as any to instil self-discipline, for the pursuit of individual self-fulfilment but through co-ordinated social action as the villagers in their circles at wakes, in ring-games, or other such occasions did and still do. For modern participatory democracy it teaches valuable lessons about the powerlessness of the powerful, of excellence and achievement through orchestral management. The choreographer (leader) is nothing more than a conductor. The dancer (as instrument of expression) is also part of the creative process. One can destroy a line of poetry that doesn't work. One cannot destroy a dancer.

None of this rules out the challenge for the East Indian variable in the continuing creolisation of Caribbean culture, especially in Trinidad and Guyana where the matter of numbers cannot continue to be ignored. Despite the transformation of many men and women of East Indian ancestry into Caribbean men and women with sensibilities honed in the crucible of the traditional Euro-African battle for space, one is aware of the force of more recent reconnections with Mother India as well as with the creolised Caribbean Indian forms which must find their place in a textured Caribbean ethos sooner rather than later. The subliminal battle for space between the creolised Afro-Caribbean and the late-comer East Indian Caribbean is second only to the major battle between Europe and Africa on foreign soil. The products may be different, the process is the same. We have much to teach each other therefore and the area of the arts is probably the best mediator.

What an excellent road to cognition for the young! The integration of mind and body, of imagination and intellect, of the expressive (outer space) with the internal feeling and understanding of a theme, a musical phrase, a situation (inner space). Dance in Education is a serious thrust by many Caribbean educators in the formation of the next generation, though North Atlantic Physical Education Studies in Polytechnics of the United Kingdom persist with a vengeance. The battle for space continues. The learning of Jamaican history through the music and dance festival of Jonkonnu brought from West Africa with correspondences from English mumming brought from Britain is still at the 'project' stage in Jamaican dance education.⁹ However, the hope continues that schools will adopt such projects like one in the Orisha tradition in Shango into their curricula soon enough and provide for the next generation a viable alternative to the penetrative powers of American television by satellite, and televangelists.

Above all, the creative arts in general can help to clarify categories of viewing human achievements in the world or re-define those categories which have subtly served to perpetuate the deprivation of the Third World peoples of their space and the opportunity to integrate inner and outer space. The truth is that while we can speak of economic underdevelopment, it is ill-advised to speak as glibly of cultural underdevelopment. In the field of culture there is no 'developing world'.

Yet a new international cultural order must be on the agenda especially for the developed world. The quite indefensible categorisation of the world of the arts into 'classical' meaning Europe's excellences, and the rest (usually ethnic), into high and low culture, with high up north and low down south, must be changed. All civilisations are endowed with the cycle of mutually reinforcing modes of artistic expression which I have elsewhere described as ancestral/traditional, contemporary/popular and classic. This is the story of all civilisations worth their salt. The spaces occupied by the different modes of expression are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they inhere within the experience of the same people over time and their cyclical existence confirms the dynamic process of integrating the different worlds of human experience which makes man the textured resourceful organism that he is – the victor rather than the vanquished in the battle for space.

Notes

1. *Chandogya Upanisad* VIII, 1, 3, (transl. Vedic Experience) quoted in main programme-brochure of International Seminar on Inner and Outer space, India International Centre, New Delhi.
2. The majority of the populations of the Commonwealth Caribbean are people of African ancestry with the exception of Guyana where some 53 per cent of the population are of Indian heritage. The rule applies equally since the Eurocentric value system determines the ethos and Indians are expected to become 'West Indians' in order to 'belong' to Guyana.
3. See H. Orlando Patterson's excellent study of slavery entitled *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Washington DC: Howard University Press, 1982).
4. The following Anglophone Caribbean countries are independent: Antigua/Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St Kitts/Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent, Trinidad/Tobago while Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands and the Turks/Caicos Islands remain British colonies.
5. The region is rich in 'creole languages' created over the past four centuries following on the encounters between migrants from the Old Worlds (Europe and Africa mainly and later in Asia). See notes 2 and 3 to the essay, 'The Caribbean: Crossroads of the Americas'.
6. For further reading on the Rastafarians of Jamaica, see M.G. Smith, F.R. Augier, and R. Nettleford, *The Rastafari Movement in Kingston, Jamaica* (Kingston; ISER, 1960); Leonard Barrett, *The Rastafarians* (London: Heinemann, 1977); 'Rastafari,' *Caribbean Quarterly* vol. 26, no. 4, 1980.
7. See my *Dance Jamaica: Cultural Definition and Artistic Discovery* (New York: Grove Press, 1985).
8. Rex Nettleford, 176–7.
9. See Shelia Barnett's, 'Jonkonnu and the Creolisation Process in Jamaica: A Study in Cultural Dynamics,' unpublished Master's Thesis, 1977.

Race and Creole Ethnicity in the Caribbean

Percy Hintzen

Caribbean identity occurs within the discursive space of the "Creole". To be "Caribbean" is to be "creolised" and within this space are accommodated all who, at any one time, constitute a (semi)-permanent core of Caribbean society. Creolisation brought with it notions of organic connections across boundaries of ethnicised and racialised difference. It was the mechanism through which colonial discourses of difference, necessary for its legitimation, were accommodated. Everyone located in its discursive space, whatever her/his diasporic origin, becomes transformed in a regime of identific solidarity. At the same time, the Creole construct is integrally inserted into a discourse of exclusion as a boundary-maintaining mechanism. Maintaining a strict and rigid boundary between "Caribbean" and "non-Caribbean" (local versus foreign) has functioned strategically as a mechanism for manipulation in the maintenance of order and control.¹

From this perspective, Caribbean ethnicity is constituted by its *créolité*. In their panoptic gaze, White colonisers imposed *créolité* to render invisible the racialised division of labour and the racial allocation of power and privilege. Historically, the discourse of racial difference has been shifted to distinctions between the Creole and non-Creole. The result has been a valorisation of White purity, located outside Creole space. This valorisation, at the root of White supremacy, became the foundation principle of colonial power, privilege, honour and prestige. *Créolité* went hand-in-hand with the symbolic capital of Whiteness.² It offered the possibility of "whitening" while demonstrating the consequences of descent into the world of savagery represented, in European discursive construction, by the colonised.

Nationalism, according to Benedict Anderson, is to be understood in terms of "the large cultural system that preceded it, out of which – as well as against which – it came into being".³ And culture constitutes the representations and practices of ethnicity. As its precedent, *créolité* has imposed upon Caribbean nationalism European aspirations that have become hidden behind the veil of anti-colonialism. It has served to hide commonalities in social practice that could have formed the basis of counterdiscursive challenges to North Atlantic power. The visualisation of similarities located outside of European constructs could have come with "new possibilities for struggle and resistance, for advancing alternative cultural possibilities".⁴

Creole discourse has been the bonding agent of Caribbean society. It has functioned in the interest of the powerful, whether represented by a colonialist or nationalist elite. It is the identific glue that bonds the different, competing and otherwise mutually exclusive interests contained within Caribbean society. It paved the way for the accommodation of racialised discourses of difference upon which rested the legitimacy of colonial power and exploitation. Difference was rendered invisible in a cognitive merger created and sustained by its impositions. Competing interests and relations of exploitation and privilege became socially organised in a fluid clinal system of racial and cultural hierarchy. This was the observation of Caribbean sociologist Lloyd

Braithwaite in what has been termed a “reticulated” colour-class pattern of social stratification by anthropologist Leo Despres.⁵

To be Caribbean, then, is to occupy the hierarchical, hybridised, “Creole” space between two racial poles that serve as markers for civilisation and savagery. It is to be constituted of various degrees of cultural and racial mixing. At the apex is the White Creole as the historical product of cultural hybridisation. The Afro-Creole is located at the other end of the Creole continuum. The “creolisation” of the latter derives from transformative contact with Europe’s civilising influences and from physical separation from Africa. Valorised forms of European racial and cultural purity become unattainable ideals in Creole representation and practice. Distance from the ideal European phenotype and from Europe’s cultural practices determines and defines the Creole’s position in the social hierarchy.

Thus, the principles of hierarchisation of Caribbean-Creole society are intimately tied to notions of European civilisation and African savagery. When applied to Europeans, creolisation implies the taint of savagery. When applied to Africans it implies a brush with civilisation. The Caribbean is the location where civilisation and savagery meet and where both become transformed. In this regard, Creole nationalism becomes a quest to be fully European.

The discourse of purity is one of the means through which disciplinary power is imposed upon Caribbean society. Under colonialism, White purity came to be represented as symbolic capital in the practices of the colonial administrators. This was contrasted with the hybridised practices of the White Creole. In the English colonies these different regimes of representation were concretised in colonial institutional practices of the nineteenth century. In the administration of governance, White Creole practices were represented in a merchant-planter-dominated financial college, which became the representative arm of the local White population. British colonial interests came to be signified and represented in the practices of a Court of Policy that served, in effect, as the legislative arm of government. Executive power was exercised through a colonial administration centred on the governor and comprising civil servants appointed by the Crown.⁶ This development in political representation and practice contributed significantly to the process of White creolisation. It paralleled the development of divergent material interests between local and metropolitan capitalists. It differed across territory, irrespective of colonial jurisdiction, and presaged differences in the presence and significance of White Creoles in the development of Creole identity across the region.

The Discourse of Purity

The hybridised reality of Creole society left little room for accommodation of claims to cultural and racial purity. It is important to emphasise here that purity, like race, is socially constructed. It emerges out of discursive regimes of representation and practice. In Dominica, for example, despite a long history of racial intermixing with Blacks, cultural conversion, and the practice of Creole forms of social organisation, discourses of purity still exclude the putative descendants of the indigenous Kalinago (“Caribs”) from Creole society. Purity emerged as a boundary defining and maintaining principle separating Creole society from the external world. It is a central principle in the discourse of difference that separates the “local” Creole White from the foreign “pure” European. This distinction is quite important in the assertions by the national elite of cultural claims to the new global order of North Atlantic universalism. These assertions have been made possible by nationalist rejection of White supremacy. As symbolic and cultural capital (acquired knowledge, skill and capabilities) such assertions have come to embody the new European aspirations of the nationalist elite.

To be “genuinely” White in the Caribbean is to be culturally and racially pure, untainted by absorption into the society of the former enslaved Blacks. This taint of impurity, forged out of cultural and sexual contact with the African, became the basis for exclusion of White Creoles from colonial power and privilege. Paradoxically, the organic connection to the “territory”, which was at the root of such exclusion, assured the White Creole a position of privilege in nationalist construction. White inclusion in the nationalist space suggests the need for a much more nuanced view of the nationalist movement. The embrace of representations and practices of the racialised European mirrors precisely, the position of the nationalist movement toward European institutional and cultural forms. Many of the latter were adopted wholeheartedly after independence.⁷ Whiteness, however tainted, retains its valorised position in Creole-nationalist construction. The rights of White Creoles to social and economic privilege and preference in the territorial space were retained, and even enhanced, with the departure of the colonial power. In many instances, White Creoles are used as international brokers in the new regimes of sovereignty. At the same time, their representation as cultural and racial hybrids and their organic claims to the territory served to protect their social and economic privilege in the crucible of anti-colonial nationalism with its anti-European and anti-White implications. Such representations rendered their “Whiteness” invisible in the face of a nationalist rejection of White supremacy. In this way, White creolisation became the mechanism for the non-problematism of Whiteness. It legitimised a post-colonial version of racial capitalism and explains the continued domination of Whites in the private sector of the post-colonial Caribbean.

Thus, the nationalist movement was neither anti-White nor anti-European. Rather, it was a contestation of the claims of Whites and Europeans to supremacy and superiority. Its various assertions of Africanness in national expression must be understood in these terms. The meaning of such assertions continues to be subject to debate among scholars and writers in the Francophone Caribbean under conditions where nationalist ambitions have been frustrated. Rather than a shift to sovereign independent status like their Anglophone counterparts, the French Antilles have become incorporated into the administrative and jurisdictional structure of the French state as *départements*. Frustrated nationalist ambitions have fuelled the development of a Créoliste movement “agitating for the local culture and language of the French West Indies”.⁸ This has supplanted earlier nationalist expressions framed around notions of Négritude. Leading members of the movement have rejected Négritude’s notions of Africanness that were integral to Caribbean nationalism. They consider claims to an African past to be an “illusion of Europe with that of Africa”.⁹ They have painstakingly pointed out the contradictions in the Négritude movement in the support provided by its leadership, headed by Aimé Césaire of Martinique, for *département* status and in Césaire’s firm embrace of the party-politics of France. In all of this, what clearly emerges is the rejection of Africa and an embracing of Europe. It is an embrace that is firmly implanted in Caribbean nationalist representations and practices. Its themes are more convincingly evident in the competing versions of nationalist expression in the French Caribbean. They are not so obvious in its Anglophone versions. The necessity of challenging the authorial power of Britain rendered invisible the latter’s fundamentally European character.

Creole discourse locates all with claims to purity outside of the territorial community of the Caribbean. This is the point of the Créolistes charge of African and European illusion. Indeed, they go a step further by valorising hybridity as “the vanguard of a world-wide movement”.¹⁰ In other words, créolité portends the racial and cultural hybridity of a new North Atlantic that is at the forefront of neoglobalisation. Such hybridity is essential to the notions of Creole nationalism and

to the European aspirations contained within them. It substantiates the self-location of the Creole at the centre of a new globalisation of the Europeanised North Atlantic. Thus, Patrick Chamoiseau, one of the movement's leading ideologues, describes creolisation as a "great poetics of relation, which allows people to express their newfound diversity, to live it fluidly. In creolisation, there never comes a time of general synthesis, with everyone beatifically at one with one another."¹¹

Thus, claims to purity, essentialised around geographic discourses of origin, cannot be accommodated in Creole discourse. This is the basis of the Créolistes' discomfort with "illusions of Africa and Europe". It is why the North must first undergo a *métissage* transformation to accommodate the European aspirations of Creole nationalism. Thus, firmly embedded in nationalist aspirations is the goal of the conversion of Europe into the pregnable, transitory and open space that is the Caribbean. This is very much what has occurred in the French Antilles. The assertion of créolité is very much a declaration of the hybridisation of European space occupied exclusively by Whites. Indeed, the term Creole, before its hybridisation, signified the representations and practices of White French Caribbeans known as *Békés*. It referred specifically to "a White person of pure race born in the Antilles".¹²

Post-emancipation indentureship imposed its own legitimating regime of exclusion. Its legitimacy rested upon the "racial" and cultural location of the new indentures outside of the European-African continuum of Creole society. But the new rationality of exclusion also applied to European and African post-slavery indentures. Portuguese indentures, imported from Madeira, were unable to make immediate claims of racial affinity with the White Creoles in Trinidad and British Guiana (now Guyana). They remained for a time outside of Creole society. For post-emancipation African indentures, the boundary maintaining distinction between African and Afro-Creole, typical of slave systems, prevailed. Once inserted into plantation society, however, Portuguese and Africans became quickly amalgamated. For the African, creolisation came with location at the lowest rung in the colour-class hierarchy.¹³ The Portuguese took over from Coloureds in small-scale retailing. They followed a trajectory of incorporation into Creole society by Whites and near Whites as "trading minorities".¹⁴ This was also the path followed by the small migrant population of Lebanese, Syrians, Jews and post-indenture Chinese who, with the Portuguese, were able to establish themselves in the retail sector, particularly in Trinidad and Jamaica.

Amalgamation has become integral to the historical reproduction of Creole identity. It calls for an abnegation of purity through sexual and cultural immersion. The Creole space "swallows everything up ... remaining permanently in motion, pushing us headlong in a movement of diversity, of change and exchange."¹⁵ "Blending and impurity" stand as its fundamental values.¹⁶ With the exception of the Syrians and Lebanese, whose cultural forms disappeared with their creolisation, immersion has acted, historically, to modify the African-European continuum in the Anglophone Caribbean. Rituals and practices of Creole transformation can include racial immersion through miscegenation. Cultural immersion can occur through marriage, religious conversion, association and adoption of the tastes and styles of Creole society. Cohabitation has become quite important in individual practices of creolisation. For the offspring of the ensuing unions, Creole parentage negates any claim to purity. It brings with it automatic location within the White-Black continuum. To some degree, cohabitation with White Creoles has offered the most acceptable means of immersion into Creole society for those located outside of the European-African space. As the most "desirable" of the Creoles, cohabitation with Whites serves to lessen the social opprobrium of creolisation with its implications for impurity. Thus, with the exception of the Whites who were pushed "downward" into Creole space, the thrust of creolisation has always been upward to the

European end of the racial and cultural spectrum. The quest of the nationalist movement was to penetrate the barrier of racial purity by hybridising European space.

Exclusion and Incorporation

Symbolic exclusion is the instrument of disciplinary power wielded historically against diasporic communities functionally integrated into Caribbean political economy. It rendered legitimate the systematic denial of any claims non-Creoles might make upon the resources of Creole society. This became the basis for exclusion from opportunities provided through access to these resources. While historically pervasive, the discriminatory and exploitative consequences of symbolic exclusion were not always universal. With exclusion came also the benefits of freedom from the normative strictures of Creole society. It created opportunities unavailable to those located in the colour/class hierarchy of Creole social space. The discourse of purity served historically, until well into the twentieth century, to confine Asian Indians to rural agriculture and to justify their semi-servile status. At the same time, however, Asian Indians have managed to use peasant agricultural practices as a springboard for upward mobility through business and the professions. In the process, they were able to eviscerate the social stigma of agricultural labour. Their agricultural background did not prefigure in social evaluations of their fitness for business and higher education, as it would have been for Creole subjects. As “outsiders”, these standards of evaluation were rendered irrelevant.

The benefits of exclusion were evident, also, in the ability of Chinese and Portuguese (coming in as nineteenth-century indentures), Syrians, Lebanese and the small number of Jews (all arriving after World War I) to exploit economic opportunity. Their exclusion from Creole society freed them from the strictures of colour imposed by their light complexion. As such, they were able to ignore the principles of behaviour and association implicated in the colour/class hierarchy of Creole society. They established themselves in petty trade by developing highly personalised relationships with customers lower down the colour/class hierarchy. From here, they created niches in small-scale retailing, particularly in Trinidad, Jamaica and British Guiana (now Guyana). Their activities, and the pattern of associations and practices engendered by them, became the springboards for the structural and social insertion of their members into colonial Creole society. Once located in Creole space, they were able to combine symbolic capital (derived from their colour) with economic capital to move up the social hierarchy. Many came to occupy positions identical with or just below Creole Whites. What became most evident in their upward mobility was the importance of the symbolic capital of Whiteness. This pattern of amalgamation and upward mobility was not available to the over 40,000 post-emancipation Africans brought to the Caribbean between 1834 and 1867 for plantation labour.¹⁷ Their amalgamation occurred at the lowest rung of the colour/class continuum of Creole society.

It is through racial and cultural incorporation that the transitory nature of Creole society is preserved. Incorporation allows Caribbean society to respond to the constantly changing pressures and demands from outside its borders. These must be accommodated for the very economic survival of the territories of the region. Practices of amalgamation have changed the racial and cultural character of Creole society. They have produced new forms of racial hybridity involving, particularly, Asian Indian and Chinese post-slavery additions to plantation society. Similarly, new emergent forms of cultural hybridity have become integrated into Creole practice. Thus, cultural and racial insertion has contributed to an historical reformulation of Creole identity. It has produced, over time, a modification of its racialised construction. Dark skin continues to retain the signifying

power of inferiority. However, its exclusive association with African diasporic origin is no longer a firmly entrenched principle. Thus, a White-Black polarity based on colour has replaced Europe and Africa at opposite ends of the Creole continuum. This has been particularly the case as new diasporic communities with origins in Asia, the Middle East, and in the indigenous population of the region have become immersed into Caribbean reality. "Blackness", however, continues, by and large, to retain its association with Africa in an ongoing counter discourse to Creole construction. This is quite evident in the regional spread of the Rastafarian movement that originated in Jamaica¹⁸ and in the Orisha religious movement in Trinidad.¹⁹

For the most part, the indigenous and diasporic communities with cultural and racial origins outside Africa and Europe remain, in representation and practice, outside Creole reality. For members of these communities, amalgamation is available through individual practices of cultural and sexual immersion. For Asian Indians, individual practices of racial miscegenation with Afro-Creoles have been significant enough to produce a distinctive Creole variant identified as "Douglas" in local lexicon. As the products of Afro-Indian unions, "Douglas" have become integral to the construction of Creole identity in Guyana and Trinidad. They have also come to symbolise the threat posed by creolisation to Asian Indian purity. The theme of "Douglarisation" emerges persistently in Asian Indian narratives of purity. It has become emblematic of the polluting consequences of sexual contact with Africans. "Douglarisation", therefore, is the process of transformation of Asian Indians into racial Creoles through miscegenation. Another route to Asian Indian creolisation is through cultural amalgamation. Asian Indians may enter the social space of Creole organisation through practices of inter-marriage, religious conversion, Creole association (including location of residence) and through the adoption of Creole style and tastes.

The representations and practices of *créolité* are responses to the deployment of symbolic power at the disposal of the constituents of its various segments and of those located outside its symbolic space. Each is engaged in a constant struggle to define Creole reality. Creoles activate honour and prestige as symbolic power, they activate resources of economic, social and cultural power available to them, and they activate the privilege of belonging in order to maintain *créolité's* existing integrity. Those excluded from *créolité* definition are perpetually engaged in efforts to redefine its character or to challenge its centrality in national conceptions of belonging. These struggles produce constant reformulations over time of the cognitive schemata that inform Creole identity and out of which its representations and practices are fashioned. They have also produced territorially specific manifestations of Creole constructs.

Trinidad provides an example of the complexities and idiosyncrasies of Creole construction and its implication for nationalist discursive formation. The European cultural component of Trinidadian society has been shaped quite significantly by Spanish colonialism (the former colonial power) and by the presence of a French merchant plantocracy (via Haiti after the Haitian revolution). As "local Whites", French and Spanish Creoles were historically differentiated from the administrative class of the British in colonial representation and practice. As a result, Creole identity in Trinidad became heavily infused with French and Spanish representations and with Roman Catholicism. It has also been influenced by the presence of Asian Indian, Chinese, Portuguese, Syrian and Lebanese diasporic populations and by the various racial and cultural hybridities produced in social interaction among all these groupings. In particular, hybridised rituals and symbols of Asian Indian representations and practices are gaining considerable visibility in Creole construction. This is despite the latter's historical exclusion from the creolised space of Trinidadian identific discourse. At the same time, Trinidadian *créolité* has amalgamated the representations

and practices of “Douglas” (the products of miscegenous unions between Africans and Indians), Portuguese (by giving up their claims to Whiteness), and Chinese, Syrians and Lebanese (through cultural amalgamation and miscegenation).

At over 40 per cent of the population, the size and functional integration of East Indians in Trinidad have had profound consequences for the reproduction of Creole society. Their strategic presence has produced considerable challenges to the central role that *créolité* has played in nationalist construction. The fundamental contradiction between the structural integration of Asian Indians in Trinidad’s political economy and their symbolic exclusion from nationalist space has produced an increasing crescendo of national conflict as well as persistent contestation of nationalist discourse. Access to Creole society has been available only to those members of the Asian Indian community prepared to reject representations and practices of purity on cultural grounds or to those who are prepared to reject patterns of racial solidarity and marriage endogamy. One avenue for rejection is through conversion to Christianity. For the smaller population of Muslim Asian Indians (which constitutes less than 25 per cent of the total Asian Indian population), religion poses less of a barrier to creolisation given their monotheism and the common foundation of beliefs that they share with Christianity. As a result, Muslims have been much more visibly included in the representation and practices of Creole nationalist expression. However, discourses of purity continue to locate the large majority of Asian Indians, as Hindus, outside the national space. Members of the Asian Indian middle classes, particularly its economic, social, and political elite, experience most profound pressures for creolisation. This derives from their high degree of functional integration into the “Creole” segments of Trinidad’s political economy. To this is added their own predispositions toward creolisation as they seek to realise the benefits of nationalism that have accrued to their Creole counterparts in the post-colonial era. The pressures and predispositions have resulted in the incorporation by many Hindus of more universal western forms into their religious practices and the opening up of their religion to Creole practitioners. It has produced a form of creolisation that comes with little sacrifice to Hindu identity.²⁰

Notwithstanding the pressures placed upon the Hindu middle classes and their own predispositions for Creole incorporation, there is mounting resistance to creolisation among the Hindu cultural elite. In their campaign, they activate the symbolic power of purity to petition for inclusion in the nationalist space as Asian Indians. Hindu purity is deployed as a symbolic resource by these leaders to delegitimise “polluted” Creole discourse. The leaders reject the central role that Creole representations occupy in notions of national belonging. Such rejection is organised around narratives of cultural degradation directed, particularly, at the cultural ascendancy of Afro-Creole forms in nationalist discourse. There is mounting contestation of the claim made by Afro-Creoles of their own central role in nation building. Asian Indians are beginning to present themselves as the true builders of the nation. Their cultural elite has constructed an historical narrative of Asian Indians as redeemers who have, time and again, delivered the country from the abyss of Afro-Creole degradation.²¹ The Asian Indian challenge to Creole nationalism is not merely a quest for nationalist inclusion. Rather, it is an attempt to retain representations and practices of cultural purity while resisting “Douglarisation”. It represents a redemptive counter-discourse to Afro-Creole nationalism and presents a fundamental challenge to Trinidadian *créolité*. It remains a rejection of the “blending and impurity” of the form of hybridity that occupies the critical centre in the value framework of Creole’s discourse.

Despite Hindu challenges, the fundamental thrust of creolisation is deeply embedded in the historical development of Trinidadian national identity. *Créolité* occupies the critical core of the

country's national psyche. This is evident in the mythic representation of the "Spanish". As a social construction of the ideal-typical Trinidadian, it has emerged as a means of managing the complexities and conflicting pulls of diasporic identity. But "Spanish" identity is instructive in another important way – it exposes and externalises the European aspirations that exist at the root of Creole discourse and that are integral to the country's nationalist expression. It is a narrative of a simpler time in Trinidad colonial history before the introduction of plantation slavery (and hence of the complexity of the African presence). The "Spanish" construct embodies all the positive elements of the various ethnic groupings that occupy the country's territorial space (creolised or otherwise). As such, it is a trope of hybridised harmony in the face of multiple and competing representations and practices of difference.²² But it is a harmony forged out of idealised "European" qualities, devoid of notions of ethnic, cultural and social exclusivity.

In Trinidad, the struggle for the nation occurs in the field of symbolic production and reproduction. Representations and practices of purity are raised as challenges to Creole nationalism. In Guyana, symbolic representations of nationhood that valorise Creole cultural forms are less important than practices of institutional solidarity. This is related partly, to an historical absence of White Creoles in the colour class order of Guyanese social construction. Nationalist discourse did not have to accommodate a White Creole presence through the activation of colonial notions of cultural and biogenetic hybridity. The absence of Creole discourse left a cultural vacuum in the nationalist movement that was filled by competing racial claims to the state. Such claims were activated after 1955 through deployment by competing political elites of institutional resources under exclusive racial control. This occurred in the wake of a breakdown in the multi-racial nationalist movement. It set the stage for development of an integral association between nationalist organisation and existing racialised practices of institutional inclusion and exclusion.

Between 1957 and 1964, racial claims to the state by Asian Indians were held in check by colonial overlordship and by colonial predispositions to countenance the demands of the Creole elite for control of national power and privilege. But the efforts of the British colonial office to place this elite in power through fiat collapsed after an uncertain tenure between 1964–1967. Creole elite ascendance was stymied in the face of a successful effort to place a more Africa-centred stamp on Guyanese nationalist expression. During the 1960s, the African Society for Cultural Relations with Independent Africa (ASCRIA) had become highly integrated into the structure and organisation of the Black nationalist People's National Congress (PNC) that had run the country since 1964. ASCRIA's leaders enjoyed powerful positions in the government and saw their role as ensuring the location of the Black lower class at the centre of the country's nationalist agenda. In the colour-class hierarchy of Creole society, this grouping's historical location at the bottom of the socio-cultural ladder facilitated and reinforced identic notions of its own African origin. The Black lower class comprised Afro-Guyanese rural own-account peasantry and urban proletariat, many of whom were migrants from rural villages. ASCRIA was the organisational arm of its membership. The Association's leadership mounted challenges to Creole discourse with narratives of African belonging. Under its influence, the country's foreign relations shifted to an emphasis on the development of close relations with the African continent. At its insistence, elements of the state's national policies were adopted, almost wholeheartedly, from Tanzania's version of cooperative socialism.

The emphasis on Africa conflicted with the culturally rooted aspirations and practices of the country's Creole middle classes, a significant proportion of whom were Coloured. By 1971, middle-class opposition forced the ruling party to abandon its ideology of Africa-centred nationalism.

In response, ASCRIA leaders resigned their government posts and began a scathing campaign against the ruling PNC. Added to rejection of an African-centred nationalism by the Black and Coloured middle classes was strong and organised opposition from an Asian Indian population that exceeded 50 per cent of the country's total. As a means of neutralising Asian Indian challenges to its nationalist agenda, the PNC was forced to embark upon a strategy of co-optation of the most strategic sectors of the Asian Indian political economy, particularly its businessmen, professionals and educated elite. This received added impetus from the ruling party's quest for institutional control of the public space. In turn, the Asian Indian elite came to rely upon the protection and patronage of a ruling party in control of the overdeveloped Guyanese state.

The absence of a legitimate historical cultural claim to nationhood, rendered Afro-Creole assertions of nationalism in Guyana quite problematic. Asian Indian opposition produced a need for co-optation of the Asian Indian elite. Co-optation combined with middle-class opposition to dilute Afro-Creole nationalist expression.

Through its strategy of co-optation, the ruling party exercised considerable control over the public activities of strategic sectors of the Asian Indian population. It was able, also, to neutralise the effects of Asian Indian opposition. East Indians are strategically located in all the major institutional sectors of the political economy, much more so, in most cases, than the Creole population. This is particularly true of the local private sector, where ownership and control is almost exclusively Asian Indian and is reinforced by the type of racially endogamous patterns of recruitment and hiring that typifies every sector of Guyanese political economy. There is also a significant presence of East Indians in the professional sector. They enjoy an almost exclusive racial presence in the country's agro-productive sector as cash crop producers and plantation labour.

By 1975, the international relations of Guyana's ruling party shifted to a close alliance with Eastern Europe. This occurred in the wake of state take-over of the foreign private sector and of many large local merchant and trading enterprises. In the process, the "nation" came to be constituted by the institutions of the state. The latter began to play pervasive roles in almost every aspect of public behaviour. The justifying ideology of socialism displaced cultural notions of Creole national belonging from the centre of nationalist discourse.

Socialism, a Euro-Communist orientation in foreign policy, and co-optation of the Asian Indian institutional elite all combined to produce a form of nationalist expression that was less integrally tied to *créolité* than was the case in Trinidad. Guyanese nationalism began to take the form of state-centered institutional cooperativism. It became identified with the institutions of governance and with the domestic institutional interests represented by and identified with the governing elite and its allies.²³ In Trinidad, competition for the national space occurs over issues of its ethno-cultural character. In Guyana, competition for the national space occurs over access to the institutional resources of power. In both cases, however, challenges to nationalist construction emerged from within the Asian Indian population. In Guyana, they were mounted by representatives of East Indian working-class interests.

Nationalist expression in Guyana has come to incorporate the symbolic capital of the governing elite and the interests it represents. In popular consciousness, these continue to be understood in racial terms despite efforts at cross-racial co-optation. The result is a racialised struggle over control of the national space that takes place in the political arena. The struggle is objectified in political competition for control of the governing institutions of the state and takes place among competing racialised political organisations – these include political parties and trade unions. In 1992, the Asian Indian political elite, organised since the 1950s in the People's Progressive Party

(PPP), regained the executive and legislative power that it lost in 1964. It proceeded to redefine the national space using the control it exercises over the executive and legislative branches of the state. In response, the campaign for control of the nation has shifted to the bureaucratic apparatus of government (including the country's police and security forces) and to the judiciary. Both remain largely under the control of a Black and Coloured bureaucratic elite.²⁴ These have become the locomotive centres of Afro-Guyanese challenges to an East Indian take-over of the institutionalised national space.

Asian Indians in Trinidad and Guyana have employed different strategies to challenge nationalist constructs and to redefine national identity. In Guyana, challenges have been mounted also by the Black lower classes. Each challenge represents a specific instance of the incorporation over time of multiple and competing claims to the national space. Each is a particular response to colonial and post-colonial discourses of exclusion, legitimised in the historical production and reproduction of Creole reality. Each challenge presents itself as an assault against the rituals, symbols, and institutions of Caribbean self-representation. In the final analysis, each represents a counter-discourse to the complexity of cultural and racial representations and practices constitutive of Creole identity and to the honour and prestige that underlie Creole claims to privilege and power. In Trinidad, *créolité* remains visible as the critical component of nationalist expression. In Guyana, it is rendered invisible by the institutional construction of national space. At the same time, it continues to be pervasive in the representations and practices of all the racialised groupings of elite. Its non-problematization in Guyana has intensified the process of Asian Indian creolisation, producing a Creole elite distinguished from its Afro-European counterparts only by the racialised sources of its institutional power.

Creole discourse is so integral to national identity in the Caribbean that nation-state contestation seems to lead, inevitably, to the intensification of the process of creolisation for those located outside of Creole space. Efforts aimed at dislocation from the state seem to be capable of producing a more successful result. In Dominica, the Karifuna descendants of the indigenous Kalinago ("Caribs") are engaged in a struggle for autonomy against the Creole nation-state. The struggle is a manifestation of the developing organisation of indigenous peoples in Latin America and the Caribbean. It has emerged in response to colonial and post-colonial practices of exclusion and displacement organised through historical containment of the Karifuna in a Kalinago reserve. Ironically, these very practices have become bases for rejection of Creole nationalism. During colonialism, they facilitated the super exploitation of the Karifuna as they became structurally integrated into the Dominican political economy.

Karifuna contestation of nationalist authority occurs through rejection of the historical practices of marginalisation and displacement. They have engaged the legal system to make a claim for exclusive right of occupation of the very "Carib Territory" that was developed for their exploitation. In the process, the "Territory" has become transformed into the symbolic objectified centre of Karifuna identity. The demand for autonomy is accompanied, periodically, by ritual acts of purification. Such as the expulsion of non "Caribs", particularly Afro-Creole males and their Karifuna female partners, from "Carib" territory.²⁵ What is significant here is that Karifuna claims to territory are based on notions of prior occupation. The contestation of Creole nationalist practice is organised by groups with putative claims to indigenous identity – this provides them with considerable moral legitimacy. Such legitimacy is transformed into symbolic power in the deployment of the honour and prestige that attaches to the rights of prior occupation. As such, Dominica provides an example of the strategic deployment of symbolic power in the contestation

of Creole domination. This form of contestation is not confined to Dominica alone – parallel movements have emerged among “Carib” populations in St Vincent and the Grenadines.

Creole nationalism has been negotiated differently by the much larger indigenous population of Guyana. “Amerindians” occupy a much more ambiguous position in Guyanese nationalist space compared with the Karifuna in Dominica. They do not have at their disposal a single territorial location that can be converted into a symbol of identific separation from Creole society. Rather, they are scattered throughout the hinterland of the country in numerous small communities under the disciplinary authority of Creole administrators and functionaries. Their integration into Creole society and into national institutions varies with geographic location and is not uniform. This is accompanied by an uneven pattern of economic integration into the Guyanese political economy. Amerindian communities display varying degrees of cultural hybridity: most of their members have been converted to Christianity and there are varying experiences of miscegenation across the several geographic communities. “Amerindians” experience differing degrees of co-optation in the institutional arena of politics and have differing degrees of access to the institutionalised national space.

The absence of a definitive identific boundary between “Amerindian” and Creole societies has diluted demands for autonomy from nationalist representations and practices. Their indeterminate relationship to Creole practice and to nationalist expression has produced less of a predisposition to nationalist rejection than their counterparts in Dominica. This is despite participation in international and local organisations of indigenous peoples.²⁶

In Barbados, Creole society has deviated little from its original colonial construction. In its historical reproduction, much of the European-African roots in its colour-class hierarchical social formation has been retained. The persistence of this ideal-typical form can be explained by a history of uninterrupted British colonial rule. There was no importation of labour for post-slavery indentureship and this minimised the possibility of counter-discourses to Creole formulation that appeared in countries like Guyana and Trinidad. A certain idiosyncrasy has emerged in the historical reproduction of Creole society. The Barbadian historical process of creolisation was fashioned much more from cultural rather than bio-genetic syncretisation. Practices of cohabitation between Europeans and Africans were significantly less than in the other territories and this is reflected in the relatively small number of persons classified as mixed. At 2.6 per cent, these “Coloureds” constitute an even smaller proportion of the population than Creole Whites who number around 3.3 per cent. Thus, the colour-class continuum is far less smooth and far more abrupt in Barbados. There is a considerably greater discernible distinction between White and Afro-Creoles in representation and practice. This distinction is only minimally mitigated by the presence of the small intermediary grouping of Coloureds. The local White Creole had considerable access to power and privilege in colonial organisation. White settlement and identification with the territory was fostered historically by colonial practices of White Creole governance. This was accompanied by a great degree of institutional exclusivity in economic, social and cultural practices. The local merchant-plantocracy, together with the colonial administrators, dominated the politics of the colony until the introduction of representative government in the mid-twentieth century. Since then, power has been shared with the Coloured and Black Creole middle classes.

Creole discourse has rendered almost impossible the accommodation of any diasporic community existing outside the European-African continuum in Barbados. The latter part of the twentieth century has seen immigration of a merchant class of South Asians that has grown to 0.5 per cent of the population. Despite an initial period of intermarriage within the local community, the

social location of members of this grouping remains strictly confined to a position outside Creole nationalist space. There, they retain their cultural and racial distinctiveness as “foreign”. This has contributed to the reinforcement of identific rituals of purity as Hindus and Muslims. These rituals are accompanied by strict practices of endogamy in marriage. Community organisation is tight and closed and there is an enforced social seclusion of women.²⁷

The Euro-cultural aspirations of Creole nationalism are least hidden in Barbadian nationalist discourse. Anglophilia continues to be strong in Barbadian popular consciousness and is evident in the generalised pride expressed in the idea of the country as a “Little England”. There has been little challenge mounted against the economic, social and symbolic power of the Creole Whites.

Conclusion

The representations and practices of Creole nationalism differ significantly across the territories of the Anglophone Caribbean. Such differences reflect the varying compositions of colonial and post-colonial societies and the different ways in which the diasporic communities have become inserted into political economy. Ultimately, they reflect, in all the manifestations of créolité, differences in the technical and social conditions of capitalist production over time and space. Conceptualisations of White purity continue to reinforce and legitimise a system of globalised dependency. Domestically, Creole nationalism continues to hide the reality of racial capitalism. Aspirations to cultural purity have prevailed in the face of hybridity and have been at the root of an endemic conflict over identity and nationalism in the region. They have also foreclosed opportunities for regional integration. Creole nationalism in the post-independence era has foreclosed possibilities for development of a social construction that can serve as an alternative to the cultural and social legacy of Europe. It has wedded the former colonies to patterns of international relations characterised by an uncritical acceptance of the North Atlantic as the center of the social, cultural, political and economic universe. This has been the tragedy of the current colonial construction of créolité in the Caribbean.

Notes

1. For an elaboration of the ideas discussed in this paper and their application to race and ethnicity in the Caribbean see Percy Hintzen, ‘Race and Creole Ethnicity in the Caribbean,’ in *The Blackwell Companion to Racial and Ethnic Studies*, ed. David Golberg and John Solmos (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001).
2. The use of the term ‘symbolic capital’ is taken from Pierre Bourdieu and pertains to the accumulation and display of symbols of honour and prestige that renders ‘unrecognisable’ the true exploitative nature of relationships of economic exchange. It is ‘denied capital recognised as legitimate.’ See Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 118, 112–21.
3. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983), 19.
4. Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1995), 155.
5. See Lloyd Braithwaite, ‘Social Stratification in Trinidad,’ *Social and Economic Studies* 2 (1953): 5–175, and Leo A. Despres, *Cultural Pluralism and Nationalist Politics in British Guiana* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1967).
6. Vere T. Daly, ‘A Short History of the Guyanese People,’ *Daily Chronicle*, 1966, 214.
7. The point here is not that white creoles should not be included in the nationalist definition. Rather, it is to point out the paradox of this embrace by a nationalist movement rooted in challenges to white supremacy.
8. L. Taylor, ‘Créolité Bites: A Conversation with Patrick Chamoiseau, Raphael Confiant, and Jean Bernabé,’ in *Transition* 74 (n.d.): 124.
9. See Taylor, ‘Créolité Bites,’ 128.
10. *Ibid.*, 141.

11. Ibid., 136.
12. Ibid., 132.
13. Maureen Warner-Lewis, *Guinea's Other Suns: The African Dynamic in Trinidad Culture* (Dover, Massachusetts: Majority Press, 1990).
14. D.G. Nicolls, 'No Hawkers and Peddlers,' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34 (1981): 422–26.
15. See Taylor, 'Créolité Bites,' 142.
16. Ibid., 137.
17. J. Asiegbu, *Slavery and the Politics of Liberation, 1787–1861* (London: Longman, 1969), 189–90.
18. Barry Chevannes, *Rastafari: Roots and Ideology* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995).
19. J. Houk, 'Afro-Trinidadian Identity and the Africanisation of the Orisha Religion,' in *Trinidad Ethnicity*, ed. K. Yelvington (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1993), 161–79.
20. See Morton Klass, *Singing with Sai Baba* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991).
21. Kevin A. Yelvington, *Producing Power: Ethnicity, Gender and Class in a Caribbean Workplace* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 77.
22. Isha Khan, ed., 'What is "a Spanish"?: Ambiguity and Mixed Ethnicity in Trinidad,' in *Trinidad Ethnicity*, ed. K. Yelvington (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1993), 180–207.
23. See Percy C. Hintzen, *The Costs of Regime Survival* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 169–71.
24. Percy C. Hintzen, 'Democracy on Trial: The December 1997 Elections in Guyana and its Aftermath,' *Caribbean Studies Newsletter* 25 (1998): 13–16.
25. C. Gregoire, P. Henderson and N. Kanem, 'Karifuna: The Caribs of Dominica,' in *Ethnic Minorities in Caribbean Society*, ed. Rhoda E. Reddock (St Augustine, Trinidad: University of the West Indies, Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1996), 107–71.
26. D. Fox and G.K. Danns, *The Indigenous Condition in Guyana* (Georgetown: University of Guyana, 1993).
27. P. Hanoomansingh, 'Beyond Profit and Capital: A Study of the Sindhis and Gujaratis of Barbados,' in *Ethnic Minorities in Caribbean Society*, ed. Rhoda Reddock (Kingston: University of the West Indies, Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1996).

A Dialogue: Nation Language and Poetics of Creolization

Kamau Brathwaite and Edouard Glissant

PART I

Brathwaite:

Because of putting the point of departure for this discussion in the scope of the *nation language*, I will try to explain what it is like. In the first place, it expresses the experiences of an oppressed people always criticized and put down by the establishment because of its status. *Nation language* is not taught in the schools; it is not regarded as a respectable version of speech and literature. The only place where you can hear it publicly in the English-speaking Caribbean is on the radio, in advertisements and songs. That means that it is, semi-officially at least, recognized now; that it is possible to reach the mass of the people through this means. It can also be heard in the theater because in drama it is necessary to bring forward the language of the people. This area of experience and expression has always been with us as our main resource. The tragedy is that this main resource, as so many other things, have been marginalized.

Let me give you some examples of what it sounds like. When people say something like: "Let eyewater kiss the light of your lashes," now, "eyewater" means "tears" and the light of your lashes is describing the effect that the tears have on the lashes of your eyes. In standard-English we say, "I see your eyes glisten as you cry" or something similar. The "eyewater" itself comes as a translation from Kwa, from the Akan languages, in a way that there is no particular verb for "cry." An adjective is being used as a verb and transforms syntax, in itself interesting, but which we have not yet been able to standardize.

Another example is: "Mek dumplin bom your belly." Here we are using a lot of explosives. "Mek" for "make," and "dumplin" which is a food that we eat pounding and making it into a tight ball. If "dumplin" boms your belly it means that this is going to hit your stomach and hit with a force, create a force within you, to give you some kind of gravity. There is also a lovely old proverb: "Fowl nyam cockroach in the court of kings." Again "nyam" comes from West Africa, "nyam" is the verb for "to eat" in many African languages, transferred to the Caribbean where it is used in the same way. But it is also given this decorative form showing that the English court of kings is an alien concept in juxtaposition to an African type of expression. Another example is, "Cricket sound creep like stars." It means there is the sound of crickets (cicada) creeping in the grass and it is moving in this slow manner in and like the night.

Nation language is not 'dialect' or pidgin or 'vernacular' though it is perhaps based on these elements; but unlike 'dialect,' as we use that term in the Caribbean, with its implication of broken or sub-standard or stupid, ignorant, not important, marginal, *nation language* implies a tongue-cosmos in its own right; a language-energy which since it carries the memory and 'luggage' of the ancestors, carries the enriching wisdom (reverberation) of pro/verb and italics and nomenclature, where the name of the thing is the same or part of its sound, of its song, of its depth. Above all, *nation language*

with all its resources ancient and modern (demonic, demotic, magically surreal, vodouniste) looks always to the future of the nation/language/culture. Lamming's Fola, Miss Queenie's kumina, EKB's limbo, Bob Antoni's *Divina Trace*, Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Julian Hunte's *Swim around Barbados* (Sea doan have no back door; Full belly na fraid a wind; God doan love ugly; She delight in the fritter of de finger-dem). It is part of our people's expression but one which has not been allowed to become a central part of our official culture. We struggle with it, we selfconsciously use it in many cases or submerge it altogether.

I want to give you an example from my own self of how difficult it was to achieve this concept of reality. I was born in Barbados, which is a very small coral island, the most easterly of all the Caribbean islands. The Caribbean is now a tourist destination, an arch of 2,000 miles, a lovely arch of some 2,000 islands for the matter, stretching from the tip of Florida right along to the South American coast. Its tips are a sunken range of mountains which a million years ago angled a great eastward spiral from the Americas, from the Rockies to the Cordillera of Central America and into the awesome Andes. We are at right angles to this, and because we were at right angles we were weaker, more subject to the pressures of the sliding curve of movement. And so we collapsed into the ocean, creating a catastrophe of sunken memory and leaving only the sunken tips of these volcanic memories, the islands of the Caribbean. It is my impression that even now, a million years later, we still hear the echo of that catastrophe, and much of our work relates to that memory. We somehow lost the sense of the mainland, the sense of wholeness and we became holes in the ocean. People who were on their way to Atlantis in the Atlantic ocean were now stranded like blind turtles in that sea.

Of course, growing up in that little island of Barbados, I was aware of this only dimly. I walked along the beach, all day, growing up, throwing pebbles into the ocean and hearing the sound of that sea, that mighty ocean, that sense of distance in a very small island of only 144 square miles; my sense of space and distance, therefore, had to come from the ocean and the sky. I had the sense that somewhere out there was the genesis of the Caribbean; somewhere out there was the answer to what I hoped to be able to create as an artist, a genesis which is really where all art begins.

As I was walking along that beach I recognized that the history that I had inherited did not permit me to inherit any natural genesis. It permitted me to inherit a sense of genocide, which is quite different from genesis, fundamentally the opposite, because the people that inherited that landscape picking up the echo of that catastrophe had been exterminated by the Spanish, by the conquistadores of Columbus: within thirty years, some thirty million people died. So that when the Caribbean was inherited by what has been called the New World, the modern world, we had no original native ancestors. We had, instead, an imposed language, an imposed politics, an imposed culture which did not permit me, walking along the beach in Barbados, let's say in 1960, on the eve of independence, to have a natural inherited sense of genesis.

I very much yearned, therefore, to write the beginnings of the Caribbean. Unless I could write the beginnings of the natural geopsychic Caribbean there was no way that I could begin with my own poetry. So I skidded my pebbles into the ocean, blooming our islands moving in my imagination like whales on the horizon. But I could not write the poem of genesis because I had no model nor sense of the natural history in our archipelago. When I tried to write that genesis I stumbled upon intrusive models from prejudice, from literature, from school. Instead of writing about 2,000 miles of islands I could only write about a little pool at my feet, influenced by John Keats, "Ode to the pool, o lonely pool in the mighty ocean." Or if I attempted the genesis in another way, there was the intrusion of mighty Milton, tones which did not permit me to capture the essence of our history. It did not permit me to capture that catastrophe which I spoke about. The iambic pentameter which is what we had inherited

as colonials and which has been consecrated in our schools gave me things like "I wandered lonely as a ... on hills ... daffodils ... or parting day ..." and it gave me wonderful Milton and Shakespeare.

But the hurricane which cuts into the Caribbean every year does not howl in pentameters. And for the slave-girl whose back is harshed by the whip of the slave-master when she shrieks in pain there is no English metric. Unless I could find something that sounded like some native fossil, there was nothing I could write about except pools and so on.

So I pitched my pebbles into the pool and was still unable to get anywhere. Until from stones skidding on the water, I had for the first time one visual sense; that if God had created the Caribbean, he would have used a pebble, not an anvil or discobolus, and each made him, at last, a Caribbean god. He was not going to use a brush or canvas or Sixtine Chapel ceiling, like Michelangelo, or a thunderstorm like Thor or Baldur or Richard Strauss; he would have used a pebble, and each skidding of a stone on the water would have created an island, and so I had Cuba, Santo Domingo, Puerto Rico, the Virgins, the Saints, Antigua, Montserrat, Martinique, Trinidad, Barbados. As the stone skidded on water it even created the curve with its inertia and that is the curved shape of the Caribbean.

But I still found that that stone did not really skid, in my mind, to the rhythm of my song. Until I discovered that the skid of the stone, that pointilliste syncopation, that unexpected movement of stone on water, that even the way it looks like a little curve makes it very similar to the face of what we had created in the Caribbean, what we call a steelpan, I could not write the poem. One of the original inventions of the 20th-century, the steelpan, is basically the music of Trinidad. And with that sense of butterfly, Anansi, steelpan, calypso, it occurred to me that I did have available –although the schools had not permitted me to acknowledge it– an ancient and very modern song which would correlate to the skidding of the stone on the water and which could make it possible for me to write that simple genesis of the Caribbean. If I could relate the sound of the skidding stone, it would be possible for me to find my own expression. I would not only be able to write the first chapter of the genesis, but I might be able to initiate myself into the poetry of the Caribbean. And so this poem, which is the heart of my concept of *nation language* because I could relate the skidding stone to the song of the calypso, freed me of Milton and the pentameter and Michelangelo and anybody else. It celebrates the rhythms of our own people permitting to enter in the experience that the rhythms correspond to. It is very important to recognize that every rhythm, every metaphor, everything that is native is a silent symbol for something which is much deeper, much more native, which as you begin to relate to it leads you to the future of its written reality.

And so I started writing: "The stone had skidded arc'd and bloomed into islands, Cuba and San Domingo, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Bonaire." That is how the simple poem began, that is the skidding stone. But in fact, the poem, although it might appear like that on the page, there is much more to it than only scripture because *nation language* is essentially a holistic experience. *Nation language* is an experience which is connected at the same time to visual and audible experience. *Nation language* has to have movement in it. You attempt in a sense to reduce or to atomize the essence in a single vocable. That is the essence of nation language. To be able to create a total picture of experience through a simple sound. This poem is not to be said at all, but to be sung. So it sounds like this, the first poem that I wrote:

The stone had skidded arc'd and bloomed into islands: •

Cuba and San Domingo

Jamaica and Puerto Rico

Grenada Guadeloupe Bonaire

curved stone hissed into reef
 wave teeth fanged into clay
 white splash flashed into spray
 Bathsheba Montego Bay
 bloom of the arcing summers...

Glissant:

It was very interesting what Brathwaite discussed. I see some differences, however, in relationship with my own situation. First of all, in my country Martinique there is a Creole language. It existed in Trinidad and Jamaica and Barbados with an anglophone variant, but there it vanished. In Martinique we still have a Creole language which is francophone because, in the seventeenth century, the French occupied Martinique, as well as San Lucia and Dominica. On these islands the same Creole is spoken as in Martinique. But people from Martinique call the San Lucians English and the people from Santa Lucia call the Martinicans French, although speaking the same Creole. When I meet with my friend Derek Walcott, we speak Creole because it is easier.

There is a definition that Creole is a composite-language with elements taken from two different master-languages. That means that Creole in Martinique, Haiti, Guadeloupe, San Lucia or Dominica is made from a French lexicon. Saying it more precisely, it is *not* the French language, it is the language from the Normandie and Bretagne, the language spoken by sailors and other immigrants. The syntax is a kind of syntax of various languages from Africa's West Coast. Creole, hence, is really a composite-language and also a language of compromise between the ancient slaves and the ancient masters. The genius of our people is to have made of this compromise a real language.

In general, you can distinguish this Creole from pidgin or from a dialect. Pidgin or a dialect are made from one language, but you do not find this specific mixture of Western lexicon and African syntax elsewhere, only in the Caribbean. In my opinion, it is not just interbreeding, or métissage. You cannot predict its results, *creolization* is unpredictable. And that is a main point I have to make here. In the Caribbean the composition and the cultural compromise are unpredictable.

I was impressed when I heard Brathwaite speaking about the Caribbean. Because from my point of view, if you would make a parallel between the Caribbean and the ancient Mediterranean, you can find that the ancient and old Mediterranean is a sea that concentrates, that forces you into the unity of being. You can see that all the monotheist religions were born around the Mediterranean. It is there that the philosophy of the "I'un," of the unity, of the one was born. And if you look at the Caribbean, you find that it is a sea that diffracts. It does not concentrate but diffracts. You do not have the sea and the lands around, but the sea and the lands are inside. This is something my friends in Paris do not understand. They asked me: "Can you live in such a small country?" They think that I feel locked up because Martinique is a small island. But that is not true because Martinique is not a concentrating world. I can spend six years there without going anywhere because the genius of the country is diffracting, to imagine something that occurs elsewhere. This is the *poetics* of what I call *creolization*, a composite, unpredictable, multi-lingual.

When I wrote *Le discours antillais* (1981), selectively translated as *Caribbean Discourse* (1989) into English, young writers in Martinique, well-known in the area, took the topics from my work for developing a theory on "créolité." They published it as a book, *Eloge de la Créolité* (1989) in Paris, referring all the time to the *Le discours antillais* as its source and root. As they gave me the manuscript, I told them to go ahead. But when the book was published, I told them that I did not agree with the theory of créolité. Because for me, *creolization* is a process which diffracts, I do not pretend to propose something as a model for humanity as Western cultures have done for us. We are in a process of *creolization*. We are no definition of being Creole. That makes a big difference.

There is a concept I am fighting for in relation with filiation and legitimation in the Western cultures. They have developed a concept of transparence of mankind that all women and men in the world fit in. Some of them are near to the model and some are far from it. The problem of this concept is that all people must correspond with its model. But I have another point. In the struggle of decolonization the concept of the right for difference has been very strong. But this is not enough. I want the right for opacity. It means that it is not necessary for me to understand what I am. I can surprise myself, do things, work, and so on. When I mentioned this concept of opacity for the first time, six years ago, everybody said: "How can you live with something or somebody you do not understand!" But I think that this point of view is a trap. The first meaning of "comprendre" is already significant. Because "comprendre" means "prendre" and maybe strangle. This is a typical Western scientific attitude. Countries and cultures such as the West Indians do not provide a model for humanity. I do not think that we are only finding a genesis in the West Indies, a genesis of our culture, but we are returning to the narrative, we are conquering a future. That can be a little different from what Brathwaite said but, in general, I totally agree with what he said.

Brathwaite:

Although I have met Glissant several times, this is the first time we have ever exchanged opinions. I am grateful for that because, as he said and I confirm, we share so many ideas. All those concepts of future, transparence and opacity. Of course, I do put it in a different way, coming from the English-speaking Caribbean and he from a francophone area. But what is exciting for me is that we do share this common base, which in a sense is another aspect of *nation language*. Although we have been separated by distance, by language and by the politics of the metropole, we are still communicating in this interconnected way. I agree with the point of not using parallels. I used to talk about Western cultures as being missilic, and Glissant made all the movements of a missile. The other culture, the culture of the *nation language*, is the capsule, the thing that is carried by the missile as it goes out into the space. The capsule holds its self-containing life forces whose paradigm is not cutting his legs off but self-containment, what he called opacity, the plea for privacy. It is therefore an assertion of non-conquest, a culture that is not concerned with acquiring or grandizing other peoples' languages or other peoples' possessions. It is a dream and an idea, but I think that increasingly we have to say it, and to say it as loudly as possible.

Glissant:

It is interesting to think in this context about the concept of landscape, so often applied to as a model of humanity. I use to give a quotation from a work by a German researcher, Ernst Robert Curtius, *The European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*. Curtius states that all the parameters of European literature have one topic as an ideal landscape, the meadow and the source. According to him, the parameters and the prosody of all European literatures have this topic as a common ground. I realize that this is different for the Caribbean. All the literatures in our area speak about jungle, earthquake or storm. You said the same, Brathwaite, speaking about the skidding stone on the sea! In the great European literature, landscape is a decor, a frame. When a poet or novelist describes the landscape, he may do that marvelously. I like the landscape in Balzac's *Le lys dans la Vallée*. And there are many other examples, but it is always a decor. It is not an intra-part. In our literatures, landscape is not a decor but a character of its own.

We have two variants of the landscape. First as we came by sea, the Middle Passage, to the islands, and there we imagined the sea, as Kamau said. And, besides that, we were in the period of slavery. When you say slavery, there are maroons who went to the forest, to the mountains, to be free. Thus,

our ideas of freedom, of liberty, are connected to the mountains and the sea. And between these two extremes we have to manage freedom, between the mountains and the sea.

These ideas of freedom are a very important condition for us. For instance, when Fidel Castro was in the opposition, he could have gone to Havana and live in town. But he went to the Sierra Maestra. On the one hand, that was politically stupid, because Batista's soldiers were there waiting for him. And of 120 persons only twelve got into the Sierra Maestra. On the other, it was incredibly typical for a maroon to be in the Sierra Maestra; it was a West Indian act. The relation with the landscape came from a long history. Maybe he did not know it, but the symbolism of this act was very strong.

It is clear that our relation to the landscape is something you cannot imagine when you do not have these kind of images in mind. When I was in Martinique, I could observe it on the houses. You have the crest. Traditionally all the masters' houses were on the crest, because there is more fresh air. And all the slaves' houses were further down. It is not only the air but also when there is a cyclone, all the earth goes down on the houses of the poor. And now you see the Martinicans conquering the crest, sociologically a very interesting point. This relation means that not only because of becoming rich and buying a house your status is changing. More important is the relation to the landscape which changes; you change. I would not call that a model for humanity, but rather a kind of being in the world.

Brathwaite:

I would like to add to that. Our landscape is much more violent, constantly changing by sunlight, by heat, by earthquake, by storm. In a sense, one has to go back to a former situation to describe that landscape. Let me give you the example of my own poem "Flutes." Until 1988 I lived in the hills in Jamaica, in a place called Irish Town, and there was a trunk of bamboo. Every year I became closer to it. So finally I wrote a poem that I regard as the poem of the bamboo, "Flutes." And the relationship between me and that trunk of bamboo was very close until 1988, when hurricane Gilbert transformed that place of golden bamboo into a grim, dark, catastrophic place twice as high as my house. Everything that had been related to bamboo became dark and cataclysmic. The tenure of my poetry altered, it was as if my whole soul had been dumped into this kind of dirt. This is a very strong relationship you will find in the works of many Caribbean artists.

From light and glittering, soft and hopeful, the poetry became very dark and landsliding. Since then, it converted into a kind of prose, as the only way to relate to that particular disaster. But as Glissant said, it is impossible to make a model out of it. Because a model of 1986 becomes a different model in 1988. And now the bamboo has started to push back its way again at the landslide and soon we will have a Creole landscape, one that is born dark and catastrophic and, at the same time, still hopeful and green. I will have to balance between that. Only after there are enough expressions of such experiences, the critic begins pointing out a common denominator; it is what they call theory. But the expressions of these experiences precede that theory. A Caribbean artist cannot begin with a theory, with a model; he always has to begin with his or her relationship to what is *there*.

Glissant:

This is very important! Take for instance our relationship with Latin America. In the sixteenth century, the Caribbean Sea was called "The sea of Peru." And Peru is on the other side of the continent. Hence, it was called that way because in those times you had to pass the Caribbean Sea to get there. There were no other routes for the conquerors. I think we have a point here. There are a lot of Americas: North America, South America, Central America and the West Indies or Caribbean. This question of not having a filiation, not having a link to origins, is the same for all the Americas. Except maybe for the Amerindians, the only ones that can pretend to this kind of genesis. However,

as I studied the cultures and theology of the Mesoamericans, I found a very interesting concept of genesis and filiation. It begins without any link because of its system of cyclical periods of 52 years. So there is a hole! You will never find that in a Greek myth nor in the Christian religion which start directly from the genesis. And if you have a hole, you decide that Methusalem lived 900 years, or that Noah lived 700 years. You have to do that to have a legitimation to conquer. In the Mesoamerican cultures you do not find the same preoccupation, nor is there such a link in African cultures. You have filiation not by legitimation but by adoption. This is the creolization that is working all around the world and what I call the *Poétique de la Relation* (1990).

Brathwaite:

It is interesting that Glissant is speaking about Martinique as a part of Latin America. There is no way that Jamaica and Barbados, or Antigua and St. Kitts, have ever dreamt of Latin America. They do not even know what the word means. Our concept of history of the world is very AfroSaxon and Protestant, as the products of a very weird and materialistic English society. So that we grew up in a Caribbean which only knew London or Australia or Canada, anything vital to the British empire. But everything that was Caribbean, we were almost forbidden to engage with. Our own music, our own language expressions, the language that we had created over the years, and above all the isolation from the rest of the Caribbean.

Let me give you an example. If I would have lived on the island of San Lucia, in the year 1400, and wanted to visit Glissant in Martinique, I could go to the Morne above Castries, send a signal to him or his uncle, by a mirror or smoke-signal, to say to him: I am coming over that afternoon in a canoe. And we could plow into the waves at the right time and would no doubt safely arrive on the beach. Today, if I wish to get to Glissant from San Lucia to Martinique, all I have to do is to take an ocean-liner from San Lucia to London, from London across the channel to Calais and then take a French liner. Even the telephone goes that way. That is the distance, that is part of the problem. It is not only linguistic or political; it is part of a whole communication compartmentalization (compartmentALization) system. And it is particularly so for the English-speaking Caribbean. In the case of the French islands, they have remained linked to Europe so that they have an outlet to the world; they are, in a sense, part of France. Although even that might be a difficult position. The metropole never conceived us as worthy of education. It had to be, in a sense, illegitimate. We taught ourselves, which was extraordinary. The teacher could not teach us what we wanted to be taught, so our parents urged that the school allow us to teach ourselves. And also to take the examination which was still publicly there. In teaching ourselves we discovered Harlem and we discovered T.S. Eliot. And in discovering T.S. Eliot we discovered a modern voice in poetry. Without that we would have been bumped into the English pentameter, into the English romantics, you know, the Swinburne attitude. At school I never came into contact with a man called Nicolás Guillén; I did not know that Brazil had slaves, that Brazil was a plantation society similar to ours; I did not know that Africa existed as a great place either, although Barbados is the most easterly of the Caribbean islands and on a misty day we can imagine the coast of Guinea.

In the discovery of Harlem we saw the modern voice in poetry connected with the music, the relation of music and word in Louis Armstrong or Duke Ellington for instance. It was the whole release of art as expressed into music-word-dance. In other words, we realized that some of us could sing. Some of us were singing even in another country; even though we had been made to understand that singing was not good for us. The calypso was forbidden in Barbados then. Parents would be very upset if you sung the calypso, it would never be heard on radio. People regarded it as devil's music, expressed only by a certain unimaginable kind of person. And certainly not in Barbados at all, but in another island.

In teaching, though, this concept of opacity, transparency and future is always misleading. I am working in the Department of History, but I am a poet and operate as such. So if the students come expecting to hear about history, and economic history above that, you will not hear that from me. I have not done research in the archives looking for political and economic history. My research always arises from the metaphors I discover in my poetry. Only now we are discovering the submerged areas of the Caribbean, the lives of the people and the institutions they have provided for themselves over this long period of slavery and colonization. An institution like "Landship," a self-help organization in Barbados, for instance, inspires me and includes the old notion of "susu," or "coumbite," as you can find in Guadeloupe and Haiti.

When I came to write my poem "The Cabin," which is based upon a slave cabin in Jamaica, I was able to describe the cabin because I could see it. But when I came to open the door of the cabin, I realized that I did not know what was in there, nor did I know the people inside. The only cabin that I knew at that stage was Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1855). Therefore, as a historian, I had to do that necessary research to discover what the Jamaican slaves were doing at that time, what they were called and what kind of mental and physical furniture would be within their world. That is the kind of research that I do. Each time it has come from a metaphor, from a poem which was unresolved because of ignorance. Any attempt to discover something about the Caribbean has been based first of all upon an imaginative leap into the unknown, and then into a historical, archival effort to understand and define that. And I would say that that is the same anywhere in the world, except that our resources are so rich and so untapped, so untamed even, that it is necessarily done.

Therefore, this multidisciplinary approach is essential in the Caribbean. Everything you approach has a multiplicity of connotations, of overtones, of implications on many levels. I learnt this quite by accident. I studied history at the University of Cambridge, where I had to choose between literature and history. I decided to do history because I felt it would be more difficult, since literature was already with me. Having left Cambridge, I escaped as I hoped from history for many years. Living on the island of San Lucia, in a way hiding in the island of San Lucia, I was discovered by an historian, an academic from the University of the West Indies. He found it a disgrace for a historian, a Cambridge-man as he called it, to be out in the woods like that. And they engineered my return to Jamaica which is about twenty years ago now. There is no need to say that the academics, my professional colleagues, hardly speak to me in the Department of History. They do not understand how this thing works but have now accepted that it works. And thanks to our efforts, cultural and social history is now becoming central at the University of the West Indies. Everybody is now dealing with social and cultural history.

It is very important, even as academics, to have your own biography, your own autobiography, to know how you reach that conclusion out of your own experience. And that is what I always intend to do. We are not separating word from essence. For us the word and the world remain contiguous. Whereas in many other disciplines and in many other societies, since the Renaissance, the word and the world have been growing further apart. I am still 'discovering' the Caribbean. So I do not have any sense of 'inventing' anything. If anything the Caribbean is 'inventing' me! It is the Caribbean that has impinged on me more and more seriously as I have toiled in that area. And I have to use words like toil, you see, because our colonial history —of course— is similar to yours, but our colonialism has been done by the British, anglophone and Protestant. They cut us off from the rest of the Caribbean.

Glissant:

My experience comes from the plantation where I was born. My father was a kind of foreman and went from place to place. So I got to know quite well all aspects of the cultures from Martinique.

In my childhood I heard the Creole-tales and music in the country side. That is why I feel the need to intellectualize all these experiences instead of turning back to the essence. This is a difference with some of my fellow writers in Martinique, young writers of today who live in towns and who do not know plantation life. So I have a tendency to consider a kind of whole being in the world, to emphasize not only the essence—I do not like this word—but also the intellectual comprehension of things. Half and half. Maybe I am pre-Socratic, certainly not Heideggerian. I have a great feeling for the pre-Socratics. Because I do not think that it is since the Renaissance that men have been separated from the word. It is since Socrates and Plato. Maybe the pre-Socratics were black people in their mind. They were not from the Western culture. They were something else that has been lost. Maybe we have to try to find again what it was.

The other question is that listening to Brathwaite I was thinking about the francophone West Indies. We had the best and the worst part. The best because we had access to knowledge, but without this kind of attitude there is in the English-speaking or Spanish-speaking West Indies. I was always amazed (working at the Unesco) by the conflicts between my friends from Jamaica and Trinidad and Barbados and Santo Domingo and Cuba. There always was a conflict. There was a Trinidadian lady, very intelligent, saying: "Trinidad is an Atlantic power." And I said, "What are you talking about, what is that?" And the English-speaking West Indians saying: "You from Cuba try to colonize us." And the other saying, etc. But these points of discussion are obsolete for me. Maybe we have the opportunity to be close to the Latin Americans and close to the anglophones and do a kind of league.

So, we from the francophone West Indies had access to knowledge which was good. The bad thing is that it meant to be assimilated. English colonization is certainly bad, because an Englishman cannot consider a Trinidadian or a Barbadian as a really English citizen. But doing that, in a way, the Englishman respects the other culture. He does not do anything in favor of that culture, but he does not touch it either, he does not contaminate it. When I went to Dominica, it was incredible what I saw. The English have done nothing; not a road, not a house, nothing at all. The French in Martinique provided roads, electricity, telephones, but we were contaminated in our minds because of this assimilation by the French culture. So that the English- and the Spanish-speaking in the West Indies are closer to their "essence," let's say, to the relation with themselves, than the francophones.

I remember something the Cubans told me a long time ago. I was discussing with some leaders in Cuba, and at that time they had only one word in their mind: América Latina. And I answered them, okay, América Latina, but you are West Indian. And if you are not West Indian, your Latin America-being is false, not real but rhetorical. And I remember that they did not understand what I was saying. For them, at that time, the West Indies was nothing. And it took them fifteen years to understand that they could not be Latin American without being West Indians. At the end of the discussion, they told me something amazing by saying: "You from Martinique and Guadeloupe are the more accurate in mind, because you are the most fragile and threatened." And it seems to me that *that* is the real point of the situation in the West Indies regarding the francophones, anglophones or hispanophones. My conclusion is that we do not do enough to converge. Maybe this will happen by the strength of history.

Brathwaite:

Well, the first thing to converge would be political. The British West Indies have planned a political union for a long time, but never included the French or Spanish in their vision. I think, that that would have to be the first point. The other one would be cultural congresses and breaking down that communication barrier of the languages making sure that children at school speak all the languages of the Caribbean. We lack a unifying language which would make communication at all

levels much more easy. This should coincide with a common political structure. I would hardly ever meet Glissant in the Caribbean. There is no relationship between the University of the West Indies and the ones in Martinique and Guadeloupe. From time to time we send our students over and have exchanges, but these are very half-hearted. And on your own, you cannot do it. You would burn up all your energy, you would create a crusade. And I doubt that it would have any follow-up as long as the structures remain so seriously separated.

Of course, we have a natural link, Africa. Whenever we meet at festivals or anywhere else, we recognize this "sameness" in many aspects. But it has not been used as an unifying force, because Africa in the Caribbean still is something you do not speak about. There are two reasons for that. The good one is that we do not know anything about Africa. That is the good one. The bad one is that when we speak about Africa, the other ethnic groups in the Caribbean are protesting against blowing the whistle! For instance, the game of cricket, that great game that we have. Our captain said a few years ago that we had won a certain series, thanks to the excellent play of a young 'African' [African-looking] (Caribbean) guy on the team. People never forgave him. And as he went after several years to Guyana where 70% of the population is from Indian heritage, he was booed. Because of that declaration. So Africa cannot be used as a unifying force. Maybe the Amerindians would be a better base, but there again, our ignorance of Amerindians is even greater than that of Africa. Our ignorance of the past is frightening.

Glissant:

This might be true but, in my opinion, the difficulty is that we are prisoners, prisoners of our own conception of identity. I think that particularly Western culture put this in us. Identity, as a conception, has developed in Western cultures in order to conquer the world. We have to define another conception of identity, not with this conception of the roots which excludes the other by war, or conquest, or intolerance. I say this because I have the personal experience of political struggles in my own country as well as of the vision of political struggles in other countries, like Algeria for instance. And each time I saw this intolerance, I realized that the result would not be what we expected. That one more time intolerance, racism, anti-feminism, religious fundamentalism or anti-fundamentalism would come up. We have to try to define another kind of identity, not this sectoral rooting, but a relationship through a network.

In Latin America and in the West Indies you have a series of contradictory levels. You have the nation building which is contradictory with the class struggle, and you have the class struggle with the nation building as the definition of collective and communal identity. You have five or six different ethnic communities and when you try to build a nation, one community can say that you do that on *their* shoulders. So you have all these contradictions, especially in Latin America. But how can we live in community while we are still making propaganda for the idea that the human being only finds his identity in his roots. Take myself, for instance. I come from a plantation, I know that. But that is not all of me. My identity is not only the cabin where I was born, the cane-field where I grew up. I know that, it is within me. As a person, I do not need to go back to it all the time. We only need to do that as a collective. Because they cut that out of our memory. We have to recuperate this history. If West Indians and Latin Americans do not try to do that, they will be crushed by outside forces. Be it as it may, this is not the way to change the mind of mankind; rooted identity constructions are not enough. According to my concept of the *poetics of creolization* we have to fight against all mono-something. If I defend my maternal language Creole, it is not on the basis of mono-language. I defend my own language, because I think that if my language vanishes, something of mankind's imagination will perish. And I do not only think of my language. Each year a language dies in Africa and that is

unbelievable. One of the policies in the conquest of time is to fight against mono-something, monolingualism, mono-conception of nation-state or the concept of race, etc. And if we fight for that question of multiplicity and have a chance to succeed in this life, then we will succeed in other lives after us. This concept of multiplicity is not opposed to the concept of unity. I think even that the more you consider multiplicity, the more you have a chance to realize unity. That is my first point. The second is that evidently political, military or economic power is on the side of the identity concept I denounce. But history is unpredictable. You do not know if in twenty or ten years the economy here in the United States or in Japan will not fall! You do not know what will happen! If somebody, one year ago, would have said that the Soviet Empire was about to fall, you would have laughed and found it impossible. It is not possible to say what will happen in worldwide relations, nor possible to count on concrete actions on this respect.

Brathwaite:

Your concerns seem to be remarkably political and intellectual. You made the point that a nation state can fall. I would make another point. In fact, I was interested in what I consider divergence of the concerns of the poetry which can subvert the nation state from within, I hope. If it cannot, what are we doing sitting here anyway. Because it means that we are being completely futile if we do not have any Utopian dream, if we do not really and fundamentally believe that a nation state is part of us and that we can influence it in some way. So it depends on our definition of the nation state, how we conceive this strange functional apparatus. Do we have any nation state, can we change it as intellectuals or poets? I would say that if we can change I am willing to read poetry. And poetry that has a very strong rhythmic impact. In my case, rhythm becomes much more noticed when you have significant poetry, when there is syncopation and caesura and so on.

In all Caribbean work you will find that the rhythm responds as closely as possible to that remarkable rhythm of the landscape. A real hopscotch of landscape. It creates a rhythm you have to live with, which you observe and see, which you dream about. Then the very abrupt changing of seasons would be another rhythm, and also of course the rhythm of the people themselves. How they walk, how they talk in the market-place, the sudden violence followed by laughter, the constant sign of a carcass in the streets. And the carcass has the signal of a butterfly. These are rhythms which are very much part of our lives, because the butterfly is sucking some of that blood that is creating a sign of loveliness about that destination. Then you have a form which counterpoints two conflicts. And it seems to me that the nation state might be the cow, the nation state might be that carcass. And the creation of the sign should be us, in some way a signal of the possibility of metamorphosis.

Glissant:

So here we are back at the beginning of this discussion on *nation language* and its tongue-cosmos and rhythms. All music born in the West Indies, the gospels, the blues, the beguines, the calinda, were born from silence. Because it was forbidden to speak aloud and to sing. It was born from silence and in silence. One of the common cultural points of music in all the plantation areas of the Americas was the necessity to sing without being heard by somebody else, by the master or another person. The art of silence is fundamental in this kind of music. And when the music explodes in sounds, it remains in these explosions, this kind of art of silence. It gives the syncope of this music. And, therefore, these political and intellectual concerns are in the same way incorporated in its rhythms, with their "unpredictable pointilliste syncopation and unexpected movement," as Brathwaite explained and in what I call our *poetics of creolization*.

Thinking the Diaspora: Home-Thoughts from Abroad

Stuart Hall

The occasion for this lecture was the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the University of the West Indies (UWI). Nineteen forty-eight was also, as it happens, the year of the arrival at Tilbury Docks in the UK of the SS *Empire Windrush*, the troopship, with its cargo of West Indian volunteers, returning from home-leave in the Caribbean, together with a small company of civilian migrants. This event signified the start of postwar Caribbean migration to Britain and stands symbolically as the birth date of the Afro-Caribbean postwar black diaspora. Its anniversary in 1998 was celebrated as symbolizing “the irresistible rise of multi-racial Britain”.¹

Migration has been a constant motif of the Caribbean story. But the *Windrush* initiated a new phase of diaspora formation whose legacy is the black Caribbean settlements in the UK. The purpose here is not to offer a historical account of the evolution of this diaspora – though its troubled history deserves to be better known in the Caribbean, even, one (dare one suggest) more systematically studied. The fate of Caribbean people living in the UK, the US or Canada is no more ‘external’ to Caribbean history than the Empire was ‘external’ to the so-called domestic history of Britain, though that is indeed how contemporary historiography constructs them. At all events, the question of diaspora is posed here primarily because of the light that it throws on the complexities, not simply of building, but of imagining Caribbean nationhood and identity, in an era of intensifying globalization.

Nations, Benedict Anderson suggests, are not only sovereign political entities but “imagined communities”.² Thirty years after independence, how are Caribbean nations imagined? This question is central, not only to their peoples but to the arts and culture they produce, where some ‘imagined subject’ is always in play. Where do their boundaries begin and end, when regionally each is culturally and historically so closely related to its neighbours, and so many live thousands of miles from ‘home’? How do we imagine their relation to ‘home’, the nature of their ‘belongingness’? And how are we to think of national identity and ‘belongingness’ in the Caribbean in the light of this diaspora experience?

The black settlements in Britain are not totally separated from their roots in the Caribbean. Mary Chamberlain’s *Narratives of Exile and Return*, with its life histories of Barbadian migrants to the UK, emphasizes how strong the links remain.³ As is common to most transnational communities, the extended family – as network and site of memory – is the critical conduit between the two locations. Barbadians, she suggests, have kept alive in exile a strong sense of what ‘home’ is like and tried to maintain a Barbadian ‘cultural identity’. This picture is confirmed by research amongst Caribbean migrants in general in the UK that suggests that, amongst the so-called ethnic minorities in Britain, what we might call ‘associational identification’ with the cultures of origin remains strong, even into the second and third generation, though the places of origin are no longer the only source of identification.⁴ The strength of the umbilical tie is also

reflected in the growing numbers of retired Caribbean returnees. Chamberlain's judgement is that "A determination to construct autonomous Barbadian identities in Britain...if current trends continue, is likely to be enhanced rather than diminished by time."⁵

However, it would be wrong to see these trends as singular or unambiguous. In the diaspora situation, identities become multiple. Alongside an associative connection with a particular island 'home' there are other centripetal forces: there is the West-Indianness that they share with other West Indian migrants. (George Lamming once remarked that his [and, incidentally, my] generation became 'West Indian', not in the Caribbean but in London!) There are the similarities with other so-called ethnic minority populations, emergent 'black British' identities, the identification with the localities of settlement, also the symbolic re-identifications with 'African' and more recently with 'African-American' cultures – all jostling for place alongside, say, their 'Barbadianness'.

Mary Chamberlain's interviewees also speak eloquently of how difficult many returnees find reconnecting with the societies of their birth. Many miss the cosmopolitan rhythms of life to which they have become acclimatized. Many feel that 'home' has changed beyond all recognition. In turn, they are seen as having had the natural and spontaneous chains of connection disturbed by their diasporic experiences. They are happy to be home. But history has somehow irrevocably intervened.

This is the familiar, deeply modern, sense of dis-location, which – it increasingly appears – we do not have to travel far to experience. Perhaps we are all, in modern times – after the Fall, so to speak – what the philosopher, Heidegger, called 'Umheimlichkeit' – literally, 'not-at-home'. As Iain Chambers eloquently expresses it:

We can never go home, return to the primal scene, to the forgotten moment of our beginnings and 'authenticity', for there is always something else between. We cannot return to a bygone unity, for we can only know the past, memory, the unconscious through its effects, that is when it is brought into language and from there embark on an (interminable) analysis. In front of the 'forest of signs' (Baudelaire) we find ourselves always at the crossroads, holding our stories and memories ('secularized reliques', as Benjamin, the collector, describes them) while scanning the constellation full of tension that lies before us, seeking the language, the style, that will dominate movement and give it form. Perhaps it is more a question of seeking to be at home here, in the only time and context we have...⁶

What light, then, does the diaspora experience throw on issues of cultural identity in the Caribbean? Since this is a conceptual and epistemological, as well as an empirical, question, what does the diaspora experience do to our models of cultural identity? How are we to conceptualize or imagine identity, difference and belongingness, after diaspora? Since 'cultural identity' carries so many overtones of essential unity, primordial oneness, indivisibility and sameness, how are we to 'think' identities inscribed within relations of power and constructed across difference, and disjuncture?

Essentially, it is assumed that cultural identity is fixed by birth, part of nature, imprinted through kinship and lineage in the genes, constitutive of our innermost selves. It is impermeable to something as 'worldly', secular and superficial as temporarily moving one's place of residence. Poverty, underdevelopment, the lack of opportunities – the legacies of Empire everywhere – may force people to migrate, bringing about the scattering – the dispersal. But each dissemination carries with it the promise of the redemptive return.

This powerful interpretation of the concept of 'diaspora' is the one most familiar to Caribbean people. It has become part of our newly constructed collective sense of self and deeply written in as the subtext in nationalist histories. It is modelled on the modern history of the Jewish people (from whom the term 'diaspora' was first derived), whose fate in the Holocaust – one of the few

world-historical events comparable in barbarity to that of modern slavery – is well known. More significant, however, for the Caribbean is the Old Testament version of the story. There we find the analogue, critical to our history, of ‘the chosen people’, taken away by violence into slavery in ‘Egypt’; their ‘suffering’ at the hands of ‘Babylon’; the leadership of Moses, followed by the Great Exodus – “movement of Jah People” – out of bondage and the return to the Promised Land. This is ur-source of that great New World narrative of freedom, hope and redemption which is repeated again and again throughout slavery – the Exodus and the ‘Freedom Ride’. It has provided every black New World liberatory discourse with its governing metaphor. Many believe this Old Testament narrative to be much more powerful for the popular imaginary of New World black people than the so-called Christmas story. (Indeed, in the very week in which this lecture was first delivered at the UWI Cave Hill campus, the *Barbados Advocate* – looking forward to independence celebrations – attached the honorific titles of ‘Moses’ and ‘Aaron’ to the ‘founding fathers’ of Barbadian independence, Errol Barrow and Cameron Tudor!)

In this metaphor, history – which is open to freedom because it is contingent – is represented as teleological and redemptive: circling back to the restoration of its originary moment, healing all rupture, repairing every violent breach through this return. This hope has become, for Caribbean people, condensed into a sort of foundational myth. It is, by any standards, a great vision. Its power – even in the modern world – to move mountains can never be underestimated.

It is, of course, a closed conception of ‘tribe’, diaspora and homeland. To have a cultural identity in this sense is to be primordially in touch with an unchanging essential core, which is timeless, binding future and present to past in an unbroken line. This umbilical cord is what we call ‘tradition’, the test of which is its truth to its origins, its self-presence to itself, its ‘authenticity’. It is of course, a myth – with all the real power that our governing myths carry to shape our imaginaries, influence our actions, give meaning to our lives and make sense of our history.

Foundational myths are, by definition, transhistorical: not only outside history, but fundamentally a-historical. They are anachronistic and have the structure of a double inscription. Their redemptive power lies in the future, which is yet to come. But they work by ascribing what they predict will happen to their description of what has already happened, of what it was like in the beginning. History, however, like Time’s arrow, is, if not linear, then successive. The narrative structure of myths is cyclical. But within history, their meaning is often transformed. It is, after all, precisely this exclusive conception of ‘homeland’ that led the Serbs to refuse to share their territory – as they have done for centuries – with their Muslim neighbours in Bosnia and justified ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. It is a version of this conception of the Jewish diaspora, and its prophesied ‘return’ to Israel, that is the source of Israel’s quarrel with its Middle Eastern neighbours, for which the Palestinian people have paid so dearly and, paradoxically, by expulsion from what is also, after all, their homeland.

Here, then, is the paradox. Now, our troubles begin. A people cannot live without hope. But there is a problem when we take our metaphors too literally. Questions of cultural identity in diasporas cannot be ‘thought’ in this way.⁷ They have proved so troubling and perplexing for Caribbean people precisely because, with us, identity is irredeemably a historical question. Our societies are composed, not of one, but of many peoples. Their origins are not singular but diverse. Those to whom the land originally belonged have long since, largely, perished – decimated by hard labour and disease. The land cannot be ‘sacred’ because it was ‘violated’ – not empty but emptied. Everyone who is here originally belonged somewhere else. Far from being continuous with our pasts, our relation to that history is marked by the most horrendous, violent, abrupt, ruptural breaks. Instead of the slowly evolving pact of civil association so central to the liberal discourse of

Western modernity, our 'civil association' was inaugurated by an act of imperial will. What we now call the Caribbean was reborn in and through violence. The pathway to our modernity is marked out by conquest, expropriation, genocide, slavery, the plantation system and the long tutelage of colonial dependency. No wonder in van der Straet's famous engraving of Europe encountering America (c. 1600), Amerigo Vespucci is the commanding male figure, surrounded by the insignia of power, science, knowledge and religion: and 'America' is, as often, allegorized as a woman, naked, in a hammock, surrounded by the emblems of an – as yet unviolated – exotic landscape.⁸

Our peoples have their roots in – or, more accurately, can trace their 'routes' from – the four corners of the globe, from Europe, Africa, Asia, forced together in the fourth corner is the 'primal scene' of the New World. Their 'routes' are anything but 'pure'. The great majorities are 'African' in descent – but, as Shakespeare would have said, "north-by-north-west". We know this term 'Africa' is, in any event, a modern construction, referring to a variety of peoples, tribes, cultures and languages whose principal common point of origin lay in the confluence of the slave trade. In the Caribbean, 'Africa' has since been joined by the East Indians and the Chinese: indenture enters alongside slavery. The distinctiveness of our culture is manifestly the outcome of the most complex interweaving and fusion in the furnace of colonial society, of different African, Asian and European cultural elements.

This hybrid outcome can no longer be easily disaggregated into its original 'authentic' elements. The fear that, somehow, this makes Caribbean culture nothing but a simulacrum or cheap imitation of the cultures of the colonizers need not detain us, for this is so obviously not the case. But the cultural logic at work here is manifestly a 'creolizing' or transcultural one, as Mary Louise Pratt uses the term, following in the tradition of some of the best cultural theoretical writing of the region.⁹ Through transculturation "subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant metropolitan culture". It is a process of the 'contact zone', a term that invokes "the spatial and temporal co-presence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures...whose trajectories now intersect". This perspective is dialogic since it is as interested in how the colonized produce the colonizer as the other way around: the "co-presence, interaction, interlocking of understandings and practices, often [in the Caribbean case, we must say always] within radically asymmetrical relations of power".¹⁰ It is the disjunctive logic that colonization and Western modernity introduced into the world and its entry into history constituted the world after 1492 as a profoundly unequal but 'global' enterprise and made Caribbean people what David Scott has recently described as "conscripts of modernity".¹¹

In the early 1990s, I made a television series, called *Redemption Song*, for BBC2 about the different cultural tributaries within Caribbean culture.¹² In the visits I made in connection with the series, what amazed me was the presence of the same basic trace elements (similarity), together with the ways these had been uniquely combined into different configurations in each place (difference). I felt 'Africa' closest to the surface in Haiti and Jamaica. And yet, the way the African gods had been synthesized with Christian saints in the complex universe of Haitian vodoun is a particular mix only to be found in the Caribbean and Latin America – though there are analogues wherever comparable syncretisms emerged in the wake of colonization. The style of Haitian painting often described as 'primitive' is in fact the most complex rendering- in visionary terms – of this religious 'double-consciousness'. The distinguished Haitian painter whom we filmed – Andre Pierre – said a prayer to both Christian and vodoun gods before he commenced work. Like the Jamaican painter, Brother Everaldo Brown, Pierre saw painting as essentially a visionary and 'spiritual' task. He sang us the 'story' of his canvas – white-robed, tie-headed black 'saints' and travellers crossing The River – as he painted.

I felt close to France in both Haiti and Martinique, but to different Frances: in Haiti, the 'France' of the Old Empire, which the Haitian Revolution (the explosive fusion of African slave resistance and French Republican traditions in the demand for liberty under Toussaint L'Ouverture) brought to its knees; in Martinique, the 'France' of the New Empire – of Republicanism, Gaullism, Parisian 'chic' crossed by the transgressions of black 'style' and the complex affiliations to 'Frenchness' of Fanon and Césaire. In Barbados, as expected, I felt closer to England, and its understated social discipline – as one once did, occasionally, but feels no longer in Jamaica. Nevertheless, the distinctive habits, customs and social etiquette of Barbados are so clearly a translation, through African slavery, of that small-scale, intimate plantation culture that refigured the Barbadian landscape. In Trinidad, above all, the complex traditions of 'the East' in 'the West' – of Indian Carnival Queens, roti stalls on the savannah and Diwali candles glittering in the San Fernando darkness, and the distinctively Spanish Catholic rhythm of sin-contrition-and-absolution (Shrove Tuesday's masque followed by Ash Wednesday mass) that is so close to the Trinidadian character. Everywhere, hybridity, *differance*.

The closed conception of diaspora rests on a binary conception of difference. It is founded on the construction of an exclusionary frontier and depends on the construction of an 'Other' and a fixed opposition between inside and outside. But the syncretized configurations of Caribbean cultural identity require Derrida's notion of *differance* – differences that do not work through binaries, veiled boundaries that do not finally separate but double up as *places de passage*, and meanings that are positional and relational, always on the slide along a spectrum without end or beginning. Difference, we know, is essential to meaning, and meaning is critical for culture. But in a profoundly counter-intuitive move, modern linguistics after Saussure insists that meaning cannot be finally fixed. There is always the inevitable 'slippage' of meaning in the open semiosis of a culture, as that which seems fixed continues to be dialogically reappropriated. The fantasy of a final meaning remains haunted by 'lack' or 'excess', but is never graspable in the plenitude of its presence to itself. As Bakhtin and Volosinov argued,

The social multiaccentuality of the ideological sign is a very crucial aspect ... it is thanks to this intersecting of accents that a sign maintains its vitality and dynamism and the capacity for further development. A sign which has been withdrawn from the pressures of the social struggle ... inevitably loses its force, degenerating into allegory and becoming the object not of a live social intelligibility but of philological Comprehension.¹³

In this conception, the binary poles of 'sense' and 'nonsense' are constantly undermined by the more open-ended and fluid process of 'making sense in translation'.

This cultural 'logic' has been described by Kobena Mercer as a "diasporic aesthetic".

Across a whole range of cultural forms there is a powerful syncretic dynamic which critically appropriates elements from the master-codes of the dominant cultures and creolizes them, disarticulating given signs and re-articulating their symbolic meaning otherwise. The subversive force of this hybridizing tendency is most apparent at the level of language itself [including visual language] where creoles, patois and Black English decentre, destabilize and carnivalize the linguistic domination of 'English' – the nation-language of master-discourse – through strategic inflections, reaccentuations and other performative moves in semantic, syntactic and lexical codes.¹⁴

Caribbean culture is essentially driven by a diasporic aesthetic. In anthropological terms, its cultures are irretrievably 'impure'. This impurity, so often constructed as burden and loss, is itself a necessary condition of their modernity. As the novelist Salman Rushdie once observed, "hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs" is "how newness enters the world".¹⁵ This is not to suggest that the different elements in a syncretic formation stand in a relation of equality to

one another. They are always differently inscribed by relations of power – above all the relations of dependency and subordination sustained by colonialism itself. The independence and postcolonial moments, in which these imperial histories remain actively reworked, are therefore necessarily moments of cultural struggle, of revision and re-appropriation. However, this reconfiguration cannot be represented as a ‘going back to where we were before’ since, as Chambers reminds us, “there is always something else between”.¹⁶ This “something else between” is what makes the Caribbean itself, pre-eminently, the case of a modern diaspora.

The relationship between Caribbean cultures and their diasporas cannot therefore be adequately conceptualized in terms of origin to copy, primary source to pale reflection. It has to be understood as one diaspora to another. Here, the national frame is not very helpful. Nation states impose rigid frontiers within which cultures are expected to flourish. That was the primary relationship between sovereign national polities and their ‘imagined communities’ in the era of European nation state dominance. It was also the frame adopted by the nationalist and nation-building politics after independence. The question is whether it still provides a useful framework for understanding the cultural exchanges between the black diasporas.

Globalization, of course, is not a new phenomenon. Its history is coterminous with the era of European exploration, conquest and the formation of the capitalist world-market. The earlier phases of this so-called global history were held together by the tension between these conflicting poles – the heterogeneity of the global market and the centripetal force of the nation state – constituting between them one of the fundamental rhythms of early capitalist world systems.¹⁷ The Caribbean was one of its key scenarios, across which the stabilization of the European nation-state system was fought through and accomplished in a series of imperial settlements. The apogee of imperialism at the end of the nineteenth century, two world wars and the national independence and decolonizing movements of the twentieth century marked the zenith, and the terminal point, of this phase.

It is now rapidly drawing to a close. Global developments above and below the level of the nation state have undermined the nation’s reach and scope of manoeuvre, and with that the scale and comprehensiveness – the panoptic assumptions – of its ‘imaginary’. In any event, cultures have always refused to be so perfectly corralled within the national boundaries. They transgress political limits. Caribbean culture, in particular, has not been well served by the national frame. The imposition of national frontiers within the imperial system fragmented the region into separate and estranged national and linguistic entities from which it has never recovered. The alternative frame of “The Black Atlantic”, proposed by Paul Gilroy, is a powerful counter-narrative to the discursive insertion of the Caribbean into European national stories, bringing to the surface the lateral exchanges and ‘family resemblances’ across the region as a whole which a nationalist history obscures.¹⁸

The new, post-1970s phase of globalization is, of course, still deeply rooted in the structured disparities of wealth and power. But its forms, however uneven, are more ‘global’ in their operation, planetary in perspective, with transnational corporate interests, the deregulation of world markets and the global flow of capital, technologies and communication systems transcending and sidelining the old nation-state framework. This new ‘transnational’ phase of the system has its cultural ‘centre’ everywhere and nowhere. It is becoming ‘decentred’. This does not mean that it lacks power, or indeed that nation states have no role in it. But that role has been in many respects subordinated to larger global systemic operations. The rise of supra-national formations, such as the European Union, is testimony to the ongoing erosion of national sovereignty. The undoubted hegemonic position of the USA in this system is related, not to its nation-state status but to its global and neo-imperial role and ambitions.

It is therefore important to see this diasporic perspective on culture as subversive of traditional nation-oriented cultural models. Like other globalizing processes cultural globalization is de-territorializing in its effects. Its space-time condensations, driven by new technologies, loosen the tie between culture and 'place'. Glaring disjunctures of time and space are abruptly convened, without obliterating their differential rhythms and times. Cultures, of course, have their 'locations'. But it is no longer easy to say where they originate. What we can chart is more akin to a process of repetition-with-difference, or reciprocity-without-beginning. In this perspective, black British identities are not just a pale reflection of a 'true' Caribbeanness of origin, which is destined to be progressively weakened. They are the outcome of their own relatively autonomous formation. However, the logic that governs them involves the same processes of transplantation, syncretization and diaspora-ization that once produced Caribbean identities, only now operating in a different space and time frame, a different chronotope – in the time of *difference*.

Thus dancehall music and subculture in Britain was, of course, inspired by and takes much of its style and attitude from the dancehall music and subculture of Jamaica. But it now has its own variant black British forms, and its own indigenous locations. The recent 'dancehall' film, *Babymother*, is 'authentically' located in the mixed-race inner-city zone of Harlesden, in the streets and clubs, the recording studios and live venues, the street life and danger-zones of North London.¹⁹ The three ragga girls, its heroines, shop for their exotic outfits in another suburb of London, Southall, which is familiarly known as Little India. These *differences* are not without real effects. Unlike the classic representations of dancehall elsewhere, this film charts the struggles of three girls to become ragga dancehall DJs – thereby bringing the vexed issue of sexual politics in Jamaican popular culture dead centre to the narrative, where other versions are still hiding it away behind a cultural nationalist screen. Isaac Julien's documentary film, *The Darker Side of Black*, has three locations – Kingston, New York and London. Perhaps it is this relative 'freedom of place' that enables him to confront the deep homophobia common to the different variants of gangsta rap without collapsing into the degraded language of 'the innate violence of the black posses' that now disfigures British Sunday journalism.

Dancehall is now an indigenized diasporic musical form – one of several black musics winning the hearts and souls of some white London 'wannabe' kids (that is 'wannabe black'!), who speak a mean mixture of Trench Town patois, New York hip-hop and estuary English and for whom 'black style' simply is the symbolic equivalent of modern street credibility. (Of course, they are not the only garden-variety of British youth. There are also the skin-heads, swastika-tattooed denizens of abandoned white suburbs such as Eltham, who also practise their violent manoeuvres 'globally' at international football matches, five of whom stabbed the black teenager, Stephen Lawrence to death at a South London bus stop, simply because he dared to change buses in their 'territory'.)²⁰ What is now known as jungle music in London is another 'original' crossover (there have been many since British versions of ska, black soul, two-tone and 'roots' reggae) between Jamaican dub, Atlantic Avenue hip-hop and gangsta rap and white techno (as *bangra* and tabla-and-bass are crossover musics between rap, techno and the Indian classical tradition).

In the vernacular cosmopolitan exchanges that allow 'Third' and 'First' World popular musical traditions to fertilize one another, and which have constructed a symbolic space where so-called advanced electronic technology meets the so-called primitive rhythms – where Harlesden becomes Trench Town – there is no traceable origin left, except along a circuitous and discontinuous chain of connections. The proliferation and dissemination of new hybrid and syncretic musical forms can no longer be captured in the centre/periphery model or based simply on some nostalgic and exoticized notion of the recovery of ancient rhythms. It is the story of the production of culture, of

new and thoroughly modern diaspora musics – of course, drawing on the materials and forms of many fragmented musical traditions.

Their modernity needs, above all, to be emphasized. In 1998, the Institute for the International Visual Arts and the Whitechapel Gallery organized the first major retrospective of the work of a major Caribbean visual artist, Aubrey Williams (1926–90). Williams was born and worked for many years as an agricultural officer in Guyana. He subsequently lived and painted, at different stages of his career, in England, Guyana, Jamaica and the USA. His paintings embrace a variety of twentieth century styles, from the figurative and the iconographic to abstraction. His major work demonstrates a wide variety of formal influences and inspirational sources – Guyanese myths, artefacts and landscapes, pre-Columbian and Mayan motifs, wildlife, birds and animal figures, Mexican muralism, the symphonies of Shostakovich, and the abstract-expressionist forms characteristic of postwar British and European modernism. His paintings defy characterization, as simply either Caribbean or British. These vibrant, explosively colourful canvases, with their cosmic shapes and the indistinct traces of forms and figures faintly but suggestively embedded in the abstract surfaces, clearly belong to, but have never been officially recognized as part of, the essential story of 'British modernism'. No doubt his flirtation with European music and abstraction, in some minds, qualified his credentials as a 'Caribbean' painter. Yet, it is the two impulses working together, his translation position between two worlds, several aesthetics, many languages, that establish him as an outstanding, original and formidably modern artist.

In the catalogue produced for the Williams retrospective, the art critic, Guy Brett comments:

Of course, the subtlety of the matter – the complexity of the history that has yet to be written – is that Aubrey Williams' work would have to be considered in three different contexts: that of Guyana, that of the Guyanese and West Indian diaspora in Britain, and that of British society. These contexts would have to be considered to a degree separately, and in their complicated inter-relationships, affected by the realities of power. And all would have to be adjusted in relation to Williams' own desire to be simply a modern, contemporary artist, the equal of any other. At one moment he could say, 'I haven't wasted a lot of energy on this roots business...I've paid attention to a hundred different things ... why must I isolate one philosophy?'; at another, 'the crux of the matter inherent in my work since I was a boy has been the human predicament, specifically with regard to the Guyanese situation'.²¹

What, then, about all those efforts to reconstruct Caribbean identities by going back to its originary sources? Were these struggles of cultural recovery useless? Far from it. The reworking of Africa in the Caribbean weave has been the most powerful and subversive element in our cultural politics in the twentieth century. And its capacity to disrupt the post-independence nationalist 'settlement' is certainly not over. But this is not primarily because we are connected to our African past and heritage by an unbreakable chain across which some singular African culture has flowed unchanged down the generations, but because of how we have gone about producing 'Africa' again, within the Caribbean narrative. At every juncture – think of Garveyism, Hibbert, Rastafarianism, the new urban popular culture – it has been a matter of interpreting 'Africa', rereading 'Africa', of what 'Africa' could mean to us now, after diaspora.

Anthropologically, this question has often been approached in terms of 'survivals'. The signs and traces of that presence are, of course, everywhere. 'Africa' lives, not only in the retention of African words and syntactic structures in language or rhythmic patterns in music but in the way African speech forms have permanently disrupted, inflected and subverted the way Caribbean people speak, the way they appropriated 'English', the master tongue. It 'lives' in the way every Caribbean Christian congregation, familiar with every line of the Moody and Sankey hymnal,

nonetheless drag and elongate the pace of "Onward Christian Soldiers" back down to a more grounded body-rhythm and vocal register. Africa is alive and well in the diaspora. But it is neither the Africa of those territories, now obscured by the postcolonial map maker, from which slaves were snatched for transportation nor the Africa of today, which is at least four or five different 'continents' rolled into one, its forms of subsistence destroyed, its peoples structurally adjusted into a devastating modern poverty.²² The 'Africa' that is alive and well in this part of the world is what Africa has become in the New World, in the violent vortex of colonial syncretism, reformed in the furnace of the colonial cook-pot.

Equally significant, then, is the way this 'Africa' provides resources for survival today, alternative histories to those imposed by colonial rule and the raw materials for reworking in new and distinctive cultural patterns and forms. In this perspective, 'survivals' in their original form are massively outweighed by the process of cultural translation. As Sarat Maharaj reminds us:

Translation, as Derrida puts it, is quite unlike buying, selling, swapping – however much it has been conventionally pictured in those terms. It is not a matter of shipping over juicy chunks of meaning from one side of the language barrier to the other – as with fast-food packs at an over-the-counter take away outfit. Meaning is not a readymade, portable thing that can be 'carried over' the divide. The translator is obliged to construct meaning in the source language and then to figure and fashion it a second time round in the materials of the language into which he or she is rendering it. The translator's loyalties are thus divided and split. He or she has to be faithful to the syntax, feel and structure of the source language and faithful to those of the language of translation ... We face a double writing, what might be described as a 'perfidious fidelity' ... We are drawn into Derrida's 'Babel effect'.²³

In fact, every significant social movement and every creative development of the arts in the Caribbean in this century has begun with or included this translation-moment of the re-encounter with Afro-Caribbean traditions. The reason is not that Africa is a fixed anthropological point of reference – the hyphenated reference already marks the diasporizing process at work, the way 'Africa' was appropriated into and transformed by the plantation systems of the New World. The reason is that 'Africa' is the signifier, the metaphor, for that dimension of our society and history that has been massively suppressed, systematically dishonoured and endlessly disavowed, and that, despite all that has happened, remains so. This dimension is what Frantz Fanon called "the fact of blackness".²⁴ Race remains, in spite of everything, the guilty secret, the hidden code, the unspeakable trauma, in the Caribbean. It is 'Africa' that has made it 'speakable', as a social and cultural condition of our existence.

In the Caribbean cultural formation, white, European, Western, colonizing traces were always positioned as the ascendant element, the voiced aspect: the black, 'African', enslaved and colonized traces, of which there were many, were always unvoiced, subterranean, and subversive, governed by a different 'logic', always positioned through subordination or marginalization. Identities formed within the matrix of colonial meanings were constructed so as to foreclose and disavow engagement with the real histories of our society or its cultural 'routes'. The huge efforts made, over many years, not only by academic scholars but by cultural practitioners themselves, to piece together these fragmentary, often illegal, 'routes to the present' and to reconstruct their unspoken genealogies, are the necessary historical groundwork required to make sense of the interpretive matrix and self-images of our culture and to make the invisible visible. That is, the 'work' of translation that the African signifier performs, and the work of 'perfidious fidelity' that Caribbean artists in this post-nationalist moment are required to undertake.

The struggles to rediscover the African 'routes' within the complex configurations of Caribbean culture, and to speak through that prism the ruptures of transportation, slavery, colonization, exploitation and racialization, produced the only successful 'revolution' in the anglophone Caribbean in this century – the so-called cultural revolution of the 1960s – and the making of the black Caribbean subject. In Jamaica, for example, its traces are still to be found in a thousand unexamined places – in religious congregations of all sorts, formal and irregular; in the marginalized voices of popular street preachers and prophets, many of them declared insane; in folk stories and oral narrative forms; in ceremonial occasions and rites of passage; in the new language, music and rhythm of urban popular culture as well as in political and intellectual traditions – in Garveyism, Ethiopianism, revivalism and Rastafarianism. The latter, as we know, looked back to that mythic space, 'Ethiopia', where black kings ruled for a thousand years, the site of a Christian congregation hundreds of years before the Christianization of western Europe. But, as a social movement, it was actually born, as we know, in that fateful but unlocatable 'place' closer to home where Garvey's return met Revd Hibbert's preaching and Bedward's delusive fantasies, leading to the retreat to and the forced dispersal from Pinnacle. It was destined for that wider politicized space where it could speak for those – if the phrase is forgiven – 'dispossessed by independence'!

Like all these movements, Rastafarianism represented itself as a 'return'. But what it 'returned' us to was ourselves. In doing so, it produced 'Africa again' – in the diaspora. Rastafarianism drew on many 'lost sources' from the past. But its relevance was grounded in the extraordinarily contemporary practice of reading the Bible through its subversive tradition, through its unorthodoxies, its apocrypha: by reading against the grain, upside-down, turning the text against itself. The 'Babylon' of which it spoke, where its people were still 'suffering', was not in Egypt but in Kingston – and later, as the name was syntagmatically extended to include the Metropolitan Police, in Brixton, Handsworth, Moss Side and Notting Hill. Rastafarianism played a critical role in the modern movement that made Jamaica and other Caribbean societies, for the first time, and irrecoverably, 'black'. In a further translation, this strange doctrine and discourse 'saved' the young black souls of second-generation Caribbean migrants in British cities in the 1960s and 1970s, and gave them pride and self-understanding. In Frantz Fanon's terms, it decolonized minds.

At the same time, it is worth recalling the awkward fact that the 'naturalization' of the descriptive term 'black' for the whole of the Caribbean, or the equivalent, 'Afro-Caribbean' for all West Indian migrants abroad, performs its own kind of silencing in our new transnational world. The young Trinidadian artist, Steve Ouditt, has lived and worked in the USA, England and what he describes as the 'Surotopia' of Trinidad. He describes himself as "a post-independence American/English educated Christian Indian Trinidadian West Indian Creole male artist", whose work – in written and installation form – "navigates the difficult terrain between the visual and the verbal". He addresses this issue head-on in one of his recent pieces for his online diary, "Enigma of Survival".

Afro-Caribbean is the blanket term for any Caribbean in England. For real. It is as real as when many well-educated people here say to me, 'You are from the Caribbean, how come, you are not even black, you look Asian'... I do believe that the term 'Afro-Caribbean' is a British naming and perhaps it is supposed to represent the image of the majority of West Indian migrants who came here in the post-war period. And it is used to mark and remember in their past the politics and horrors of slavery, the European classification of Africans as *ultrainferior*. The fragmentation and loss of 'culture' but with desires to negotiate a new 'Afroness' in this diasporic site... In this specificity I can deal with 'Afro-Caribbean'... but not when it is used as the privileged index of horror to settle and centre all other subaltern Caribbean historiographies under an *Afroophilia* of the Caribbean here in Britain ... Trinidad has had a history of indentureship of Indians in labour camp apartheid for as long as it has had 'organized' slavery ...²⁵

What these examples suggest is that culture is not just a voyage of rediscovery, a return journey. It is not an 'archeology'. Culture is a production. It has its raw materials, its resources, its 'work-of-production'. It depends on a knowledge of tradition as "the changing same" and an effective set of genealogies.²⁶ But what this 'detour through its pasts' does is to enable us, through culture, to produce ourselves anew, as new kinds of subjects. It is therefore not a question of what our traditions make of us so much as what we make of our traditions. Paradoxically, our cultural identities, in any finished form, lie ahead of us. We are always in the process of cultural formation. Culture is not a matter of ontology, of being, but of becoming.

In its present, hectic and accentuated forms, globalization is busily disentangling and subverting further its own inherited essentializing and homogenizing cultural models, undoing the limits and, in the process, unravelling the darkness of the West's own 'Enlightenment'. Identities thought of as settled and stable are coming to grief on the rocks of a proliferating differentiation. Across the globe, the processes of so-called free and forced migrations are changing the composition, diversifying the cultures and pluralizing the cultural identities of the older dominant nation states, the old imperial powers, and, indeed, of the globe itself.²⁷ The unregulated flows of peoples and cultures is as broad and as unstoppable as the sponsored flows of capital and technology. The former inaugurate a new process of 'minoritization' within the old metropolitan societies whose cultural homogeneity has long been silently assumed. But these 'minorities' are not effectively ghettoized; they do not long remain enclave settlements. They engage the dominant culture along a very broad front. They belong, in fact, to a transnational movement, and their connections are multiple and lateral. They mark the end of a 'modernity' defined exclusively in Western terms.

In fact, there are two, opposed processes at work in contemporary forms of globalization, which is itself a fundamentally contradictory process. There are the dominant forces of cultural homogenization, by which, because of its ascendancy in the cultural marketplace and its domination of capital, technological and cultural 'flows', Western culture, more specifically, American culture, threatens to overwhelm all comers, imposing a homogenizing cultural sameness – what has been called the 'McDonald-ization' or 'Nike-ization' of everything. Its effects are to be seen across the world, including the popular life of the Caribbean. But right alongside that are processes that are slowly and subtly decentring Western models, leading to a dissemination of cultural difference across the globe.

These 'other' tendencies do not (yet) have the power, frontally, to confront and repel the former head-on. But they do have the capacity, everywhere, to subvert and 'translate', to negotiate and indigenize the global cultural onslaught on weaker cultures. And since the new global consumer markets depend precisely on their becoming 'localized' to be effective, there is certain leverage in what may appear at first to be merely 'local'. These days, the 'merely' local and the global are locked together; not because the latter is the local working-through of essentially global effects, but because each is the condition of existence of the other. Once 'modernity' was transmitted from a single centre. Today, it has no such centre. 'Modernities' are everywhere; but they have taken on a vernacular accentuation. The fate and fortunes of the simplest and poorest farmer in the most remote corner of the world depends on the unregulated shifts of the global market – and, for that reason, he or she is now an essential element part of every global calculation. Politicians know the poor will not be cut out of, or defined out of, this 'modernity'. They are not prepared to be immured forever in an immutable 'tradition'. They are determined to construct their own kinds of 'vernacular modernities', and these are the signifiers of a new kind of transnational, even postnational, transcultural consciousness.

This 'narrative' has no guaranteed happy ending. Many in the old nation states, who are deeply attached to the purer forms of national self-understanding, are literally driven crazy by their erosion. They feel their whole universe threatened by change, and coming down about their ears. 'Cultural difference' of a rigid, ethnicized and unnegotiable kind, has taken the place of sexual miscegenation as the primal postcolonial fantasy. A racially driven 'fundamentalism' has surfaced in all these Western European and North American societies, a new kind of defensive and racialized nationalism. Prejudice, injustice, discrimination and violence towards 'the Other', based on this hypostasized 'cultural difference', has come to take its place – what Sarat Maharaj has called a sort of "spook look-alike of apartheid" – alongside the older racisms, founded on skin-colour and physiological difference – giving rise in response to a 'politics of recognition', alongside the struggles against racism and for social justice.

These developments may at first seem remote from the concerns of new emerging nations and cultures of the 'periphery'. But as we suggested, the old centre-periphery, nation-nationalist-culture model is exactly what is breaking down. Emerging cultures that feel threatened by the forces of globalization, diversity and hybridization, or that have failed in the project of modernization, may feel tempted to close down around their nationalist inscriptions and construct defensive walls. The alternative is not to cling to closed, unitary, homogenous models of 'cultural belonging' but to embrace the wider processes – the play of similarity and difference – that are transforming culture worldwide. This is the path of 'diaspora', which is the pathway of a modern people and a modern culture. This may look, at first, just like – but is really very different from – the old 'internationalism' of European modernism. Jean Fisher has argued that, until recently,

Internationalism has always referred exclusively to a European-European diasporan axis of political, military and economic affiliations... This entrenched and dominant axis creates, in Mosquera's words, 'zones of silence' elsewhere, making it difficult for lateral communications and other affiliations to take place. Araeen and Oguibe remind us that the present initiative [to define a new internationalism in the arts and culture] is only the most recent in a history of such attempts at cross-cultural dialogue which have been erased from 'established narrations of cultural practice in Britain [and which failed] to overwhelm the deep-seated and firm structures which we interrogate' (Oguibe).²⁸

What we have in mind here is something quite different – that 'other' kind of modernity that led C. L. R. James to remark of Caribbean people, "Those people who are in western civilization, who have grown up in it, but made to feel and themselves feeling they are outside it, have a unique insight into their society."²⁹

Acknowledgment

This lecture was first given as part of the celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the University of the West Indies (UWI) held at the Cave Hill campus, Barbados, in November 1998.

Notes

1. This is the subtitle of the volume, *Windrush*, by Mike Phillips and Trevor Phillips (London: HarperCollins, 1998) that accompanied the BBC TV series.
2. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991).
3. Mary Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile and Return* (Houndsmill: Macmillan, 1998).
4. See T. Modood, R. Berthoud, et al., *Ethnic Minorities in Britain* (London: Policy Studies Institute, 1997).
5. Chamberlain, *Narratives*, 132.

6. Iain Chambers, *Border Dialogues: Journeys in Post-Modernity* (London: Routledge, 1990), 104.
7. See Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora,' in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990); and S. Hall and P. duGay, eds., *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London: Sage, 1997), 222–37.
8. See Stuart Hall, 'The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power,' in *Formations of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press and The Open University, 1994), 274–320.
9. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992). See, *inter alia*, Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1947); Edouard Glissant, *Le Discours Antillais* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1981); Edward Kamau Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770–1820* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).
10. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 6–7.
11. David Scott, 'Conscripts of Modernity' (unpublished paper).
12. *Redemption Song*. Seven programmes made with Barraclough and Carey for BBC2 and transmitted 1989–90.
13. M. Bakhtin and V.N. Volosinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (New York and London: Seminar Press, 1973).
14. Kobena Mercer, 'Diaspora Culture and the Dialogic Imagination,' in *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 1994), 63–64.
15. Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* (London: Granta Books, 1990), 394.
16. Chambers, *Border Dialogues*, 104.
17. Immanuel Wallerstein, 'The National and the Universal,' in *Culture, Globalization and the World System*, ed. A. King (London: Macmillan, 1991), 91–106.
18. Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic* (London: Verso, 1993).
19. *Babymother* was released in London, the USA and Jamaica in 1998. It was directed by Julian Henriques, the son of a distinguished Jamaican anthropologist who lives in London and produced by his wife and partner, Parminder Vir, who is from the Punjab. They met, needless to say, from these two poles of Empire, in London.
20. The official inquiry chaired by Sir William Macpherson into the death of Stephen Lawrence, convened after five years only as a result of the heroic efforts of his parents, Doreen and Neville Lawrence and a small group of black supporters, was a public event and a cause célèbre in 1998, and a turning point in British race relations. It resulted in the judge finding the Metropolitan Police guilty of 'institutional racism.' See Sir William Macpherson of Cluny, *The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report*, Cmnd. 4262–1 (1999).
21. Guy Brett, 'A Tragic Excitement,' in *Aubrey Williams* (London: Institute for the International Visual Arts and Whitechapel Gallery, 1998), 24.
22. See David Scott, 'That Event, This Memory: Notes on the Anthropology of African Diasporas in the New World,' *Diaspora* 1, no. 3 (1991): 261–84.
23. Sarat Maharaj, 'Perfidious Fidelity,' in *Global Visions: Towards a New Internationalism in the Visual Arts*, ed. Jean Fisher (London: Institute of the International Visual Arts, 1994), 31. The reference is to Jacques Derrida, 'Des Tours des Babel,' in *Difference in Translation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).
24. The title of one of the most important chapters in Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto Press, 1986).
25. Steve Ouditt, 'Enigma of Survival,' in *Annotations 4: Creole-in-Site*, ed. Gilane Tanadros (London: Institute of the International Visual Arts, 1998), 8–9.
26. For 'tradition as the changing same,' see Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*.
27. See, for example, Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).
28. Jean Fisher, 'Editor's Note,' in *Global Visions: Towards a New Internationalism in the Visual Arts*, ed. J. Fisher (London: Institute of the International Visual Arts, 1994), xii.
29. C.L.R. James, 'Africans and Afro-Caribbeans: A Personal View,' *Ten* 8, no. 16.

Re-Engineering Blackspace

Erna Brodber

There is one creative endeavour that I feel moved to talk about in this gathering and that is the completion of the task of emancipation. It is opportune I think that we spend some time thinking about this and entering it into our meditations, this task being one on which he whom this conference honours, Rex Nettleford, has applied much of his psychic and physical energy; has given the work of his head in formulating it into hypotheses and theories; his hands in writing not just for academics but for popular readership; has given his body (and imagination) to dancing and choreography forcing these issues onto the open stage; has given his voice on radio and TV, conducting the issues into the ears not only of the literate but of the illiterate of which our communities are well supplied. In this Rex Nettleford not only tells us that the work is there to be done but offers an approach to the task of completing emancipation. His life and work design a methodology: they recommend that we reach into our store of talents, identify them and this completed, apply all ten to the task at hand.

Who besides participants in this conference are the 'we' to which I refer? Rex Nettleford was the first academic that I heard on this University campus (Mona) refer to himself in an intellectual discourse as 'one of those Jamaicans of the colour of the black in the flag'. This young man had just come down from post-graduate work in Oxford; "bright can't done", had, in a public forum in 1964(?) in out-of-many-one colour Jamaica identified himself in terms of a specific colour and besides had put himself and that colour into the analytical scheme: two revolutions with one shot — self in scientific analysis and colour of self in scientific analysis. We here like him have skin colour. We could borrow his self-inclusive approach to our studies and while we make our deliberations of service to the task of emancipation, look at the man in the mirror, note his phenotype, reflect on his consequent experiences, develop our personal perspectives and openly bring this to bear on the issues at hand.

Kamau Brathwaite in 1974 presented the rationalisation for this self-inclusive colour-coded approach to discussions among Caribbean thinkers. In his *Contradictory Omens* (p33) he says

"It is my conviction that we cannot begin to understand statements about 'West Indian culture', since it is so diverse and has so many subtly different orientations and interpretations, unless we know something about the speaker/writer's own socio-cultural background and orientation".

In this work he analyses Caribbean society and in particular Jamaican society to conclude that the plural society model with its clean lines does not represent the pure truth and modifies it into the 'orientation model' (p25) which sees Caribbean and Jamaican culture-areas in terms of two great traditions - African and European, creolizing into a socio-cultural continuum within which there are a number of inter-related orientations which sometimes overlap. The 'we' of the Caribbean, to paraphrase, are of different shadings on a black-white continuum and different

orientations on the European-African cultural continuum. Our sensibilities are fashioned by our location on these twin continua. It is not enough to know you are black, you must know what your shade of black is, the nature of the experience it allows you and you must be able to identify the parallel point on the European-African cultural continuum to which that experience exposes you. For Brathwaite, it is a must that the Caribbean person entering into the intellectual arena knows, can and is willing to articulate his personal perspective as an important part of his conceptual framework. Brathwaite puts his money where his mouth is: he tells us where to find his self-analysis'

Brathwaite's fractionalising of the society is very valuable here. For him there are "four inter-related but significantly differing orientations

1. a Euro-centred elite which includes metropolitan experts and owners of significant property who have their being outside of the society,
2. a Euro-centred creole upper class of property owners who reside within the society and celebrate the values of the Euro-centred elite but are not accepted by them as brothers,
3. a creole intellectual elite who in reaction to the two other groups' ability to claim a space in Europe, have settled for the Caribbean as theirs trying now to make it as European as they can, and
4. the Afro-Caribbean (black) population, of illiterate labourers who with no access to the establishment and its values, have in the process of survival been creating what he calls a 'little tradition', rooted in the Caribbean space. The first of these orientations appear to belong to white faces, the second and third to a mixture of both and the last to black. In the hands of these last lies the development of a "real Alternative Tradition" a process which Brathwaite sees as stymied by the fact that "emancipation saw no change in the structure of the area; no change in the mercantilist system; no real change on the plantations".

Rex Nettleford recently drew our attention to the incomplete nature of the historical process which began in the British Caribbean in 1834. In *Emancipation - the Lesson and the Legacy: challenge to the Church, the Emancipation Commemoration Lecture 1994* (p4)², he says,

"The legal emancipation of the enslaved Blacks was to make it possible for the development of a society of 'self-directed souls'..."

He rues the fact that these 'souls' and the society they were to create is still waiting and wanting. Brathwaite meets Nettleford - the emancipation process is not complete. Both agree that the completion of the emancipation process means change and that change is good for these societies. Brathwaite makes it clear that the change and the good would have had to (and I assume will have to) come from the acceptance by groups 1 to 3 of the tradition evolving out of the Afro-Caribbean population. Insistence is the other side of 'acceptance' - the more 'proactive' side as they say today. Had the 'Afro-Caribbean (black) population' insisted....but Brathwaite points out too that this group, this orientation, this potential catalyst is

"losing ground fast as more and more of their number 'get' education, political power, material rewards within the world-powerful Euro-American mercantilist system" (p30).

The Blacks, the light of our world according to this analysis are losing their candle with time and their orientation can now neither be accepted nor can they insist that it be accepted by the whole. Nettleford's comment quoted above, intimates that we, his readers and audience, are part

of the historical process began in 1834. Each of us then, called by name, has a place in time, in one of the generations since 1834. Each of us then has failed to bring emancipation to its fruition. Each of us has failed to be and has failed to get others to be 'self-directed souls'.

If Brathwaite and Nettleford are right in their analysis and are pointing their fingers at our generation as among those who are losing the candle and those who are failing to complete the task of emancipation, and if their prescription for change and the example they have set us are worthwhile, then the Caribbean scholar accepting the challenge to work at this task has to begin by finding his orientation, and positioning himself in relationship to the Afro-Caribbean one, that which had held the Alternative Tradition, and has to put this found self into the analysis. To thus position our personal selves as both Nettleford and Brathwaite have done, is to locate our personal 'I's' on that great big Caribbean cricket field as players, as batsmen, fielders, bowlers and so on working along with each other. Lloyd Best admonished intellectuals in a 1967 "cropover" article in *New World Quarterly* called, "Independent Thought and Caribbean Freedom" (p29) "we are the people too", so we in this room are really right out there with everybody else on the grounds mixing with them and their shades and orientations. Action is required from this collectivity of people. What is the game plan? At another time Lloyd Best dubbed academics 'intellectual workers' making the point that there is work for all people to do together, that there are different aspects of the work, the intellectual being just one of these. What is the game plan? What is the work? To align ourselves with the traditional Afro-Caribbean population and help it to carry on the job of providing an alternative for these societies, it is to this task, the re-defining of the role of the intellectual worker that I address my comments in this paper which I call *Re-engineering blackspace*.

The 311,070 persons of African ancestry emancipated in Jamaica in 1834 and fully so in 1838, owned no land and were outside of the political system – they had no vote. Few had family power – mates, children; few owned livestock. They owned no space. They had no army, no ships, no compass, no respected organised grouping. All they had was their individual minds and souls with which to create a viable space for themselves and their progeny in Jamaica and eventually to weld themselves in a nation or a respected part of a nation. As it was in Jamaica so it was in Africa of the diaspora except for the few reconstruction years in the US South. Real emancipation clearly has to eventuate in some accepted claim on space (physical and otherwise) in these countries to which our forefathers were brought and into which we were legally emancipated. This space, like any other shelter had to be engineered out of what exists. In 1834 we were asked to leave the old house:

Slave before, mi ben slave before
Mi no slave no more
Bury mi foot chain
Bury mi foot chain
Down eena market square.³

But if not slave with a foot chain, who and with what? A new conceptual framework, frame of reference, portrait of self had to be constructed. The end product of this activity should be new blackspace. To work towards emancipation is to work towards a new definition of self and its possibilities, a new definition of the possibilities of our collective selves, is to re-engineer blackspace. This is the task.

According to Lloyd Best (p28) "... social change in the Caribbean has to and can only begin in the minds of Caribbean men" by which I think he means Caribbean people. He continues: "Thought is action for us" by which I know he means the intellectual class. In this matter of re-

engineering blackspace, of completing the emancipation process, the part of the task awaiting the 'intellectual worker' is the development of philosophy, of creeds, of myths, of ideologies, of pegs on which to hang social and spiritual life, the construction of frames of reference. Are all intellectual workers of our varying ethnic shades and cultural orientations expected to work on this task of completing the emancipation process? Kamau Brathwaite in his summary to a discussion of his finding that a certain Caribbean custom was explained by Orlando Patterson by way of the "Euro-scientific tradition" when there was another (and more feasible explanation) in the Afro-tradition, helps us towards a reasonable answer. He says (p41)

What I am suggesting here is not that there is a 'right' African explanation, or a 'wrong' Euro-scientific one, but that a proper understanding of ourselves can only be arrived at by a recognition of both traditions, both areas of explanation; and that for the Afro-Caribbean it will be increasingly more just to seek, in the first instance, African explanations and sources of overstating.

To extrapolate crudely there are issues more germane to one tradition than to the other, though the outcome will have relevance for both since they are, as postulated before, part of an on-going creolising complex. Completing the emancipation process lies in the domain of the Afro-orientation, of the children of the slaves legally freed in 1834. If the 'action' of those of them who are intellectuals is taught, then it is those who look in the mirror and see a black face who must manufacture the thoughts and other intellectual products that will eventuate in the change in the status of the black population, change of the status of the traditions of this majority force in territories such as Jamaica. If those who enter the intellectual factory must be able to identify their "socio-cultural background and orientation" (p33), then clearly these are the people who must now begin the self-examination for since this is an 'afro' issue, there are likely to be retrievable and needed data within the African tradition that might be of use and which they carry somewhere beneath their skin. In this paper I would like to draw the attention of those who identify themselves as black intellectuals ready for the liberating task of completing the process of emancipation and producing a society of 'self-directed souls', of which theirs must obviously be numbered, to the efforts of other philosophers in the Afro-tradition, in the hope that their efforts might be joined to expedite the job.

Nina Simone by way of introducing her popular song on the Black Gold Long Playing Record, *To be Young Gifted and Black* says: "This is not addressed primarily to white people; it doesn't put you down in anyway; it simply ignores you for my people need all the inspiration and love they can get". This paper seeks primarily to engage black people but it is very aware that their personal reconstruction and the extent to which they carry out the task of the first freedmen and freemen is the extent to which all racial and ethnic groups dealing with us are freed, for a skewed saucer at the bottom of the pile will cause all the others to fall and break. In any case, who is 'black'. If we are to follow the methodological strand we have been pursuing - "self-directed souls", "we are the people too", "the speaker/writer's own socio-cultural background and orientation...as a kind of navigational aid", we see that our definition of our phenotypical and social colour lies in our determination. It is not the social scientist's definition: it is what you see in the mirror.

So we here in this room have each identified our 'I'. If you find yourself to be black, you will have great difficulty in holding back the tears as you feel the lash on Cudjoe's back and watch with him as he sees his love raped by someone against whom to retaliate means certain death and the hope of ever protecting her; you are likely to feel the intense emptiness of Ottobah Cugoana kidnapped, tricked by those who look like you and sold to men of strange complexion and landed in Grenada's plantation far away from your Africa and your noble station. See his *Thoughts on the*

Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Slavery and Commerce on the Human Species submitted and published in Great Britain in 1738. If you see yourself as black, you can't help but feel. But how can the history of this West Indian futility be written? What tone shall the historian adopt? Shall he be as academic as Sir Allan Burns, protesting from time to time at some brutality, and setting West Indian brutality in the context of European brutality? Shall he, like Salvador de Madariaga weigh one set of brutality against another, and conclude that one has not been described in all its foulness and that this is unfair to Spain? Shall he like the West Indian historians, who can only now begin to face their history, be icily detached and tell the story of the slave trade as if it were just another aspect of mercantilism?

Thus asks Naipaul in that well quoted passage from his *Middle Passage*. No. You feel. To follow any of the minds above is to desert the Afro-tradition and the journey to blackspace. You feel, so "detached" is not your position: your story is not "just another aspect of mercantilism". You feel: can you still be the 'objective' scientist of the twentieth century? To feel and to feel attached is not to commit the academic sin of distorting. It is to claim your psychological space. Is to look through your 'uppentary'. From this perspective while empathising with Gugoano, you can as logically praise or blame him for accepting the story of his African captors. I have no quarrel with a text which asked its young readers to note certain things when they walked down Downing Street. My quarrel is with those who select this text for an ethnically Indian third form in a Trinidadian high school. The writers speak to English students who would want to and should want to and could walk down Downing Street. They seek to engage the students' emotions, bring their "I" into their classwork and allow them to identify with the people of their past. This approach I applaud and recommend for to assume your 'I' brings emotion, brings perspective, brings identification with our forefathers and allows us, should we follow suite, to do something George Beckford begged us to do, stop seeing slaves and to see instead 'enslaved persons'. To borrow another sentence from Lloyd Best in his article already mentioned (p30):

To do this is to opt for the view of the people not as an abstraction - the masses, but as a community of persons.

To find the 'I' allows us then not only to be human but to see the people whom we as black Caribbean intellectuals want to serve, as humans with a potential for a range of action.

Lloyd Best's sentences before the one just quoted, create a point of departure for me.

But there is much that is private experience, much that the people know; much that is real to the people. But the society is not moved only by what is real to individuals and groups. In an important sense, what is collectively real is what is politically significant. To arrive at that and then to make it common public property is our task.

I intend to show that Ethiopianism is a 'politically' significant product of the minds and souls of Caribbean people of the Afro-tradition, intent on laying down a philosophy towards the completion of the emancipation process; that it has re-engineered and can continue to re-engineer blackspace. As such it deserves the attention, even the assistance of today's Caribbean intellectuals.

Ethiopianism is "collectively real". It has been so at least since the late eighteenth century and still is alive today.

As Nettleford and others have taught us, in the religious ideology that Africans brought to the New World, physical death was not the end of life. Quite the contrary: it opened one to a new life as an ancestor, a living dead, having potential power over mortals. This understanding, transmitted orally, synchronised with a major tenet of Euro-American Christian philosophy, that there was to

man, the possibility of everlasting life and communion with the 'passed' saints. This philosophy is literature based and, with learning to read and write denied to the enslaved, as well as, in some places religious instruction, Euro-American Christian philosophy came to them in whispers. As the whispering game we played as children demonstrates, we take from whispers what fits into our frame of reference. A particular aspect of Christianity was joined (or rejoined) with African religious ideology even before we began to handle the Bible, the centre piece of this Christianity. The notion of everlasting life and of a connection between the living and the dead strengthened the African notion of the existence of the 'I' and the 'I' in each human being and the eventual liberation of the corporeal 'I' into the more potent non-corporeal 'I'.

Though Africans came to the New World from several parts of Africa and several different political groups and were more likely to think of themselves as Ga and Ibo than African, a Euro-American consciousness dictated that they be labelled according to this consciousness. Thus in the New World all were 'African' and 'slave'. It was also a Euro-American consciousness which called them children of Ethiopia and drew their attention to Psalm 68 verse 31.

Princes shall come out of Egypt Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.

Eighteenth century Euro-American missionaries justifying their christianising of the enslaved on the grounds that 'Ethiopia shall soon stretch forth her hands' were of their own volition singling out the enslaved population in the New World as elected by their God for a more mystic task than that of the hewing of wood and the drawing of water for their use. The enslaved African would naturally favour this reading and favour the Bible, this Euro-American authority on right and wrong, on ethical and spiritual issues. There is evidence that the use of the term was not particular to clerics. Brathwaite on page 30 of his *Contradictory Omens* calls us in inverted commas 'Ethiop's Authorized', a phrase he culls according to his footnote, from a poem published in London in 1764. Evidently the term, if not always the connotation was in public usage.

The enslaved person's reading of the Bible when literacy came to him, showed him mortals who had "stretch"(ed) their "hands unto God" and had their corporeal 'I's' liberated on earth. *Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in Heaven*. What couldn't happen if they the New World Ethiopians followed the Biblical injunction and "stretch(ed) (their) hands unto (this New World) God"? Cock's mouth had indeed caught Cock for in their definition of their slaves as African and Ethiopian, Euro-America had given their slaves as African and Ethiopian, Euro-American had given their slaves the basis of a liberating philosophy which they would develop into further philosophy, and action based on that philosophy. The enslaved African's reading of the Bible showed him several other references in it to Ethiopia. White-American religious groups of the eighteenth century had thought of America as the new Israel and of themselves as the chosen of God. "Cock mouth really did catch cock" for it was the word 'Ethiopia', and neither the word 'America' nor the word 'Britain' that appeared in the Bible. The conclusion: we, not they, are the people selected by this Christian God, is inescapable. By various intellectual strategies, the man Moses selected by God to be the world's greatest magician and with this gift to lead his people out of bondage, became a black man and the Israelites, black for 'Israel' now read 'Ethiopia'. We are without doubt God's people enslaved to be taught a lesson and prepared for greater work on earth, the light of the world.

This view of the New World black as (a) divinely selected and (b) selected for moral world leadership, is a crucial part of what is called 'Ethiopianism' and is the base of many intellectual workers who have located themselves within the Afro-tradition and have sought emancipation or to complete the emancipation process. The evidence of this in the early history of the enslaved African

is clearest in North America in revolts of such as that which the brothers Gabriel and Martin Prosser attempted in Virginia in 1800 and Nat Turner in 1831 in Virginia⁴. The historians say that the Prossers likened themselves and their fellow bondsmen to biblical Israelites – one I suppose was Moses and the other Aaron – and argued that “God would stretch forth His (?) arm to save and would strengthen a hundred to overcome a thousand”. Understandably. If the Ethiopian stretches forth his hand to God there has to be an accompanying stretching forth by God if action is to take place. So the Prossers marched on Henrico County, Virginia sure of their special relationship with God. Nat Turner felt too that he and his people were special to God. God had spoken to him as he had to the prophets of old and given him a special charge concerning a special people.⁵

There is evidence that persons enslaved here in Jamaica if they didn't see themselves as special to the God of the Christian church certainly saw themselves as especially close friends of some of his prophets. Edward (Kamau) Brathwaite⁶ recalls an incident in which two black Baptists were sent to trial in 1816, in Black River “accused of fomenting rebellion”. The leader of the rebellion had been charged with singing a certain song, obviously thought by the Establishment to be seditious.

He had countered that:

“He had sung no songs but such as his brown priest had assured him were approved by John the Baptist ... [who] was a friend to the negroes ...” (page 211)

Sam Sharp and Deacon Bogle, were too, men steeped in their Bible. No doubt they saw themselves as special appointees to a special people.

The Prossers, Turner, Sharp, Bogle had done their research from the one book available to them and had applied it to their social situation and had designed an action-oriented strategy accordingly. They were intellectual workers. If we here have difficulty in seeing such ‘unschooled minds’ wearing the gown and the mortar board, then let us look at Edward Blyden praised in Europe and Asia as an academic. Blyden, the son of Danish West Indians transported from Africa and enslaved here, in 1878 and again in 1882 propounded a methodology for christianising the continent of Africa. Blyden began his argument with the fact that Greek intellectuals had presented Ethiopia as ‘the place the Gods loved to dwell’, not the malarial land it was currently being made out to be and that for them Ethiopians were a most highly venerated people not the despicable man-eaters of current mythology. Ethiopia and Ethiopians were historically special. This condition dictated that those organising missionary work in Africa should pay attention to the lessons implied in God's dealings with Ethiopia. He has sent Philip to the Ethiopian Eunuch, made him baptise him and leave him to minister to his people. If Africa is to become a part of the larger Christian world and Blyden agreed that it should for Ethiopia would ‘soon stretch forth her hand to God’, then it must be missioned by people of African descent in much the same way as the Ethiopian Eunuch was baptised and left to convert his people. Blyden's programme added another element to Ethiopianism: what happens in and to Africa ought to be the business of Africans and Africans of the diaspora. These strands – the specialness of Africa and Africans and the responsibility of Africans of the diaspora towards Africa appear as well in the work and life of Alexander Crummel (1819–1898) the African-American Cambridge graduate and Bishop Turner of the African Methodist Episcopal church who was one of the first of his stature to declare that “God is a negro”.

All of the above-mentioned were clerics if also writers. Crummel's life and works are the subject of one of Wilson Jeremiah Moses monographs. Ethiopianism also entered the thought and frames of reference of the more unmistakable academic and of the literary artist. It appears in Dubois' *Children of the Moon*, in Lawrence Dunbar and obviously so in his *Ode to Ethiopia*. The political and literary efforts of our own Marcus Garvey were clearly influenced by this Ethiopianism. One of

his popular lines, 'Africa for the Africans at home and abroad' smacks of Blyden, and his African National Anthem leaves no doubt concerning the presence of Ethiopianism in his conceptual framework. The lines "Ethiopia, the land of our fathers, Thou land where the gods loved to be" harks back to Blyden's exposition in his essay *Philip and the Eunuch*.

The internationalisation of the notion of Ethiopianism and behaviour in accordance with this, is very clear in the British West Indies of the 1930's. Our own Jamaican Una Marson sidetracked the more local concern of social work with children to apply herself to this cause in London. Sent there as secretary of the Save the Children Fund, to lobby on behalf of that group, Una Marson chose to work for Haile Selassie, exiled emperor of Ethiopia and the League of Coloured People. Ethiopianism according to the researches of the British government of the day was popular in Jamaica in the late 1930's. It blamed this complex of beliefs and feelings for the riots of the time. A secret document, "an extract from conclusions of a meeting of the cabinet held on Wednesday 25/5/1938" says concerning the riots in Jamaica:

We had done a great deal for this island but nevertheless there were causes for discontent. In addition there was a good deal of racial feeling between coloureds and white people which had been much stimulated by events in Abyssinia and had now become serious. (Commonwealth Office, CO 137/839 file no 69056)

As the above indicates, Ethiopianism has its secular side. It also stimulated a secular programme. In 1938 C.L.R. James, an Afro-Trinidadian renaissance man, extremely well thought of in Trotskyite circles, left England for the US carried by his conviction that blacks were destined to be the vanguard of the international labour movement. He left the USA nearly twenty years later, even more convinced of the pivotal role that US blacks would have to play in the international socialist movement. If we interpose the phrase 'that God said' into the last sentence we see that this position fits very well into that of the clerics who had earlier maintained that blacks and particularly the New World variety, had been divinely selected for work of global significance. Padmore, (like James, a Trinidadian) of one of the generations of those freed in 1834, in 1935 parted company with the Communist International on the grounds that it was sacrificing the interest of black labour to that of the balance of power between white countries. He thereafter vowed to and did concern himself exclusively with making blacks into socialists. Crummel (according to Moses, his biographer) had stressed the "responsibility of the individual to the group" (p290). In other words, Blacks have to see to their own redemption before they take on the divine challenge of being the light of the world or the salt of the earth. Padmore's position is reminiscent of this. With scholars such as James and Padmore, Ethiopianism found in Pan-Africanism a secular arm, more to the taste of the 'schooled'. C.L.R. James wrote of Marcus Garvey:

Up to 1918 blacks, as a whole, played no particular role in world politics. The world was not conscious of them except as objects. Blacks were not conscious of themselves. A spirit of frustration, humiliation, rebellion is not political consciousness. The man who both made blacks conscious of themselves and the world conscious of blacks as a force to be reckoned with in world politics was a Jamaican, Marcus Garvey. By 1925/26 Garveyism as a force was finished, but the political problem represented by black people had been placed before the world once and for all. Henceforth it had to be taken into consideration in all calculations on a national as well as on an international scale.

Is Ethiopianism 'politically significant'? Garvey had translated the Ethiopianist ideas of those before him into a populist instrument with which to carve out a black political space. Pan Africanism was to continue this work. It has been neglected by the more recent clerics, academics and political

practitioners in Africa of the diaspora, in favour of insular nationalism, but it continues to be part of the 'unschooled' intellectuals of the Afro-tradition who feel that emancipation is incomplete. Chief among these in the post-Garvey days were the Rastafarians who in their different organisations have been honing, in particular, the religious aspects of the concept and designing a praxis.

The 'singers and players', whom says the Bible, 'will be there', have as rastafarians or others, been disseminating the ideas of Ethiopianism in its several forms.

Emancipate yourself from mental slavery
None but ourselves can free our minds

says the Rastafarian Bob Marley in a song that needs no referencing and he sings about himself in *Natty Dread* [ILPS 9281]

Dread; Natty Dreadlocks
Dreadlocks, Congo, Bongo I

Holding hands with Brathwaite and Nettleford, he continues:

Children get your culture
And don't stay here and jester
Or the battle will be hotter
And you won't get no supper

From the Trinidadian calypsonian - Superior comes?:

No matter where you born, you still African, yes man.
I don't care where you born, you still African

Black Stalin, Trinidadian calypso king for 1979, draws our attention to Ethiopianism as a political tool for uniting the Caribbean area. In this winning poem *Caribbean Unity* the two wings of Ethiopianism meet. Black Stalin points to the political gains in defining our collective selves as-

.....one race
From the same place
That makes the same trip
On the same ship

But he also recommends the religious aspect of Ethiopianism - Rastafarianism as the way forward:

If the Rastafarian movement spreading
But the Carifta dying slow
Then is something Rasta done
That the politician don't know...

Black Stalin locating his personal 'I' openly in Ethiopianism, takes a swing at the intellectuals who have barricaded themselves against this understanding, long part of the Afro-tradition:

Mr West Indian politician
You went to a big institution
How come you can't unite
Seven million
When West Indian unity
I know it is very easy
If you only rap to your people
And tell them like me

That is one race
From the same place
That make the same trip
On the same ship

Of Ethiopianism Wilson Jeremiah Moses, an authority on the history of black nationalism, has truly written in his *Golden Age of Black Nationalism*⁸

Among black writers it made repeated appearances during the nineteenth century and by World War I, Ethiopianism had become not only a trans-Atlantic political movement but a literary movement well-known among all black people from the Congo basin to the mountains of Jamaica to the sidewalks of New York. (p24)

It remains with us. It is there among the dreaded obeahmen who look to Solomon and Moses and their formulae, supposedly collated from ancient manuscripts and preserved and most certainly dispensed by the DeLaurence Company of Chicago. It remains among the Black Jews some of whom are still gathered in Caribbean. Not to mention the Rastafarian groups who have undertaken to keep Ethiopianism publicly alive so that we can “free ourselves from mental slavery” and begin to write the relevant songs, the “songs of freedom”.

Ethiopianism is politically significant. It has historically created a continent of consciousness. African Methodist Episcopalians in South Africa sang the same songs and had the same hopes as African Methodist Episcopalians in British Guiana and the USA. Padmore felt that Ghana was as much his business as Trinidad was and Dubois found his way to Africa to be gathered up to his ancestors. It created for the enslaved persons emancipated in 1834 and 1863 a physical space which transcended geographical boundaries. As we have seen, it constructed a space for the enslaved African in Western religious thought, thoughts on which other generations worked to produce an instrument which created political and psycho-physical space. “We” here “are the people too”. Is it ‘collectively real’ for us, ‘politically significant’ for us?

Now that you who see black in the mirror feel this reality, you find yourself, like Jesus with Moses and Elijah at his transfiguration, only the souls you are talking with are Paul Cuffee an African-American who, caring about Africa, in 1815 began taking New World blacks back to Africa to help to build it; with the Prosser brothers, Nat Turner and Sam Sharpe who believed they were God’s people and slavery was not the right way for them to live; with clerics Blyden, Crummel and Turner who felt that Africa was family and it was the divine duty of all ‘Ethiopians’ to make it the best that it could be; with the learned philosopher – Dubois, with James and Padmore; with Marcus Garvey; with Una Marson, with the large body of pop singers and calypsonians; with the Rastafarians, the black Jews and the obeahmen. What are they saying? Their words are in print and therefore more accessible to you than to anyone else. Can you help to write ‘those songs of freedom’; help those young people who sit up late into the night to hear what Mutabaruka – a Jamaican dub poet can tell them to help them make sense of themselves? Can you do as Lloyd Best expects of intellectuals, make the information “common public property”? Can you join with the little tradition not to study it, not to report on it but to reason with it in a shared-learning mode, and help to build the myths, the ideologies, the religious and political philosophy that will make us what this tradition thinks it can be – the light of the world, the salt of the earth, that can help us to be what Rex Nettleford want to see – self-directed souls. The little tradition has laid a foundation. Finally, I ask of you as an old West Indian migrant to Britain once asked of me: please give the youth more than a past of slavery with which to carve out a blackspace in this white world. It is for

the intellectuals in our society to tell those who are Ethiopianist that the Ethiopianism that attracts them has a distinguished and respected past.

Notes

1. Kamau Brathwaite, 'Timehri,' *Savacou* no. 2:33, UWI, Mona.
2. Rex Nettleford, *Emancipation – The Lesson and the Legacy: Challenge to the Church, the Emancipation Commemoration Lecture 1994*, Webster Memorial Church, July 1994, 4.
3. Collected from an informant in St James. See 'Conveniently Deafman,' 15, tape reference 63 St James in Erna Brodber, *Life in Jamaica in the Early Twentieth Century* a presentation of ninety oral accounts. ISER Doc Centre 1980.
4. Vincent Harding, 'Religion and Resistance among Antebellum Negroes, 1800–1860,' in *The Making of Black America*, ed. August Meir and Elliott Rudwick (New York Athenaeum, 1969).
5. Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1984)
6. Kamau Brathwaite, *Creole Society in Jamaica* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971).
7. Davies Carole Boyce, 'The Africa Theme in Trinidad Calypso,' CQ 31, no 2:77
8. Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *Golden Age of Black Nationalism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1978).

Articulating a Caribbean Aesthetic: The Revolution of Self-Perception

Gordon Rohlehr

During the period of slavery in the Caribbean, the “selves” of master and slaves, white and black, were prescribed by the rigidities of slavery and the plantation system. These were really imposed selves, hardened by the fact that the system endured for over three centuries and was thorough in its methods, most of which were directed towards the restriction of human potential and the reduction of people to tools, objects.

The limits within which Caribbean people lived were visible in every area of life; in the economics of primitive capitalism, which shackled the fragile island economies to that of the metropole; in the class stratification which resulted from the economic system, and was reinforced by the factor of race; by the various slave codes or laws, which anticipated the psychology of the modern concentration camp by several centuries. But the limits within which Caribbean people lived were most clearly visible in the need which the dominant race, class and civilization felt, to create and perpetuate stereotypes, systems of coercion (laws), and propaganda which reinforced stereotypes (education), both during and after slavery.

There is no doubt that much was destroyed, much lost or obliterated. Many minds were shattered, most accepted and adapted to the limits which had been placed on human potential. Hence we have the role-playing Black, the jive-ass Black, the Uncle Tom stereotype, and the dozens of other well-known stereotypes which have existed since slavery and have gone through several cycles of permutation since Emancipation. Du Bois in several of his works, Ellison in *Invisible Man*, Edward Brathwaite in *Rights of Passage*, have all dealt with the phenomenon of the enduring stereotype. Frantz Fanon has given it psycho-philosophical definition in his now seminal testament *Black Skin White Masks*.

The “revolution of self-perception” really began with the inner resistance of the slaves to the self imposed on them by the plantation system and slavery. In its most fundamental form it was the refusal to be a thing, an object, a tool, mere chattel: the *negation of a process of reification*.

The positive aspect of this revolution involved *the constant affirmation of the validity of the submerged self* – to borrow Edward Kamau Brathwaite’s phrase – in maroonage; the marooned, submerged and often subversive self. This *self-in-maroonage* was affirmed in infinite ways:

- a. Rebellion and constant resistance on the plantation (suicide, malingering, rioting, the Haitian Revolution, Cannes Brulées, etc)
- b. The preservation of religions with an African base, or the adaptation of these under pressure of the plantation system/structure during slavery. After Emancipation several religions existed in face of constant harassment from the Law and pressure from the Established Churches. The anthropological work on Afro-Caribbean religions is beginning

to constitute an important body of literature. Off-hand, I can list a number of concerns which have emerged from the study of these religions.

1. The continuity of West African heritages in the Caribbean. Factors instrumental in such continuity have been the isolation of some communities; the inadequacy of the education system; the fact that during the post-emancipation period communities of "liberated Africans" who had never been enslaved, were settled in various islands (Trinidad, e.g.)
2. The notion of a continuum stretching between religions with the greatest "African" content and those with the greatest "European" content. Donald Hogg in *Jamaica Religions: A Study in Variations* advances this thesis for Jamaica. Continuum theory allows for overlapping, syncretism, conflict and consensus, and leads to a notion of religion as lived process within the framework of a total society, rather than as static; fixed structures.
3. The syncretic blending of West African and European proletarian heritages, in religions such as Zion Revival, Pukkumina, Rastafarianism in Jamaica, the Spiritual Baptists or Shouters in Trinidad. Vodun in Haiti reveals another dimension of syncretism, including a post-Medieval Catholicism and a Dahomean cosmology in a single seamless theological system.
4. The relationship between religion and social institutions, such as communities and political parties. The cult/sect and charismatic or authoritarian political leadership. The cult/sect as an exploitable reservoir of popular lumpen-proletarian faith and emotion.

These are some of the concerns which have emerged from the study of Afro-Caribbean religions. That these religions are capable of leading scholars to such fundamental questions is the surest testimony of their vital and vibrant existence as the ground of being for large numbers of Caribbean people. It is also the clearest evidence of the survival of the *self-in-maroonage* after so many years of hostile laws, education, economic suppression and the cultural contempt of the white, brown and black servitors of the establishment.

- c. The survival of folktales, proverbs, rhetoric, patterns of performance, and the capacity to create style, are further evidence of the continued existence of the *self-in-maroonage*. If the original folktale has almost disappeared, the capacity for storytelling has not. Hence the storytelling tradition is maintained in The Calypso, Paul Keens-Douglas, Abdul Malik, Brathwaite's *The Arrivants*, and a growing corpus of short stories and anecdotes, which exactly parallels what has been taking place in the Afro-American tradition.

If the original propensity for proverbs and aphorisms has been modified, a tradition of moralizing still exists, and is evident in the weighty didactic element in some reggae and a few calypsoes; the desire to instruct through art.

The revolution of self-perception, then, is process, is ongoing *self-affirmation* which, in the face of the unchanging rigidity of oppression generally means self-assertion. In asking what that revolution means today we are in fact attempting to assess the quality of our self-affirmation in all the areas of our conscious living. These include:

- a. Politics and the on-going class struggle.
- b. Literature and that constant, complex exploration of the no-longer-submerged inner self; the no-longer-marooned personality.
- c. Music – Blues, Jazz, Gospel, Calypso, Funk, Reggae – and the life-styles, both sacred and secular, which sustain the music. Hence we shall have to ask ourselves what is the meaning of our capacity for celebration, dance, carnival on the one hand, and the trauma, agony and constant struggle which celebration masks. For our music, whether created by 'Trane, Sanders, 'Tosh, Marley, Chalkdust, Black Stalin or Bird, is connected with the phenomenon of survival. Sometimes as with 'Trane, it seeks to energize and humanize a city of stone and steel. Sometimes as with Chalkdust, Valentino, Marley and 'Tosh it cries out against, attacks and erodes a stone-deaf politics which, like the old plantation system it has succeeded, still regards people as things, objects, tools.

The body of my paper will be an outline of some of the trends in West Indian literature in English, which together constitute part of the on-going revolution of self-perception. For purposes of convenience I have arbitrarily divided my time-period into three interlocking phases: 1920–1950, 1950–1960 and 1960 to the present.

1920–1950

The twenties was the period of Garvey, Claude McKay and the Harlem Renaissance, to whose political and literary aspects both of these outstanding Jamaicans contributed. The thirties saw C.L.R. James's *Minty Alley*, his play *Toussaint L'Ouverture* (1936). The novels of Portuguese author Alfred Mendes (*Pitch Lake*, *Black Fauns*) and the short stories of Seepersad Naipaul *Gurudeva and Other Tales* indicated the multi-ethnic nature of the Trinidad experience. The forties were a period of steady growth in which regional periodicals such as Frank Collymore's *Bim* and A.J. Seymour's *Kyk-Over-Al* emerged. Louise Bennett, whose creative acceptance and dramatization of the language of the Jamaican people was in itself a revolution, had begun to write her poems in the late thirties, and had by 1950 become an artist whose work was known throughout the archipelago and in Panama. One of her contributions to West Indian letters was to establish the fact that the little people had not only a voice, but a way of seeing, placing and reducing the world of their social superiors.¹

The Calypso emerged during this period from the traditional structures of *kalinda* and sans *humanité picong*² to a flexible medium capable of accommodating narrative, social and political protest, scatological humour, and celebration. An entire and virtually unexplored body of oral literature exists in the Calypso. It is a literature which has intimately reflected social change, and can provide the scholar with a documentary of the changing attitudes of grassroots Trinidad.

The literature of this period was being accompanied by serious inquiry into the roots and heritage of the people of the African diaspora. There had already been the substantial work of Edward Wilmot Blyden. In America this work was to be built upon and augmented by W.E.B. DuBois. The impulse to understand, explore and vindicate an African heritage was politicized by Garvey, whose *Philosophy and Opinions* (1923) is one of the few Afro-Caribbean publications which have survived the rigid censorship of that period.

Equally remarkable was Norman Cameron's *The Evolution of the Negro*³ (1929). Cameron was a Guyanese student of mathematics at Cambridge, whose vocation to teach in Liberia impelled him to find out all he could about that country. This awakened in him an appetite to know more about Africa itself, particularly in the pre-European period: he read all the collected works of all the early

travellers. He augmented these with French translations of Arab and Moorish documents. He developed a keen interest in African art and sculpture which led him to those museums in England which house artifacts stolen from Africa during the scramble. Thirty years before Basil Davidson's now famous *Old Africa Rediscovered* Cameron had already posited the link between Egypt, the Western Sudan and Africa south of the equator. He had already refuted the then current notions that excellence in African sculpture in bronze, iron and gold was the result of European influence.

He was interested in other things besides. In Chapter 11 on the Mali Empire he showed an interest in oral traditions such as the drum and elephant horn orchestras; the praise songs and use of poetry for the recording of oral history. He felt that our poets and playwrights ought to be interested in such things and wrote poetry and didactic plays himself, in some of which he consciously sought to include an "African" presence and ethos. Forty years later in Edward Brathwaite's *Masks* (1968), there at last emerged a Caribbean poet who could give impressive shape to identifiably West African oral traditions: the drum, atumpan, mmenson, the idea of masks, as well as the history, old ceremonies, dances and aspects of Akan cosmology.

Cameron, in his introduction, anticipated the criticism that there was nothing worth studying in African history. He also anticipated the now current accusation that to be seriously concerned with the African past is to be atavistic or nostalgic. *The Evolution of the Negro* was based on the idea that the past should be explored as part of one's duty to oneself. One doesn't free oneself from the trauma of history by forgetting the past. One needed, instead, to accept past struggle as the basis for a self-confidence necessary for facing the present and creating a future. Thus, besides the descriptions of the pre-European kingdoms of Africa, Cameron dealt with the effects of contact with Europeans, slave life on the plantations and the Abolition of Slavery and emergence of the Afro-Caribbean person.

If his reading suggested the destructive nature of slavery, his vision was directed towards what was or would become possible if Afro-Guyanese people were to discover their roots. Thus *The Evolution of the Negro* sought to define these roots. Cameron spent some time describing the layout of villages as well as social institutions, laws, aspects of local government in Africa. He was interested in things such as cloth designs and hair styles, things which did not reenter popular black consciousness until the 1960's.

Cameron's book, which went into two volumes (1929 & 1934), was about History as continuity, and the historian as healer, bridge of hiatuses in our knowledge and consciousness. But the conscious or unconscious aim of education in the English-speaking Caribbean was to divorce the Caribbean person from issues and concerns of central relevance to his knowledge of self and milieu. Thus Cameron's profound and scholarly work, self-published and distributed, reached only a few people, went out of print to resurface in 1970 when it was reprinted in America. Unlike many other such reprints, it hasn't appeared on the shelves of Caribbean bookstores. Garvey's vision, too, remained in the borders of our consciousness and was for years beyond the reach of our curricula.

This is essentially what we are up against, then, a *tradition of discontinuity* by which our most crucial perceptions and discoveries are relegated to the margins of consciousness. *The Black Jacobins* (1938) C.L.R. James' great study of the Haitian revolution, took twenty-two years to be republished (1962). George Padmore is still a name. Sylvester Williams remote, despite Owen Mathurin's fairly recent publication. Robert Love is virtually unknown. F.E.M. Hercules has scarcely been heard about. This is probably why an era which produced work such as Garvey's, Cameron's and the early work of Eric Williams, should have produced artists who were generally little more than excellent observers of the surface of actions and recorders of manners.

The creative sensibility of the period was largely divorced from the creative thought of the period. One of the obvious reasons for this was the fact that Caribbean people were not in control of their political destinies, or of their economies. This point had been made over and over again in the polemics of the 1930's and 1940's. It resurfaced in the various discussions about the possibility of a West Indian Federation. One of the most interesting blueprints for a federation was A.P. Maloney's *After England We* (1949) which examined the potential and the limitations of the region as a whole, and envisioned a multi-lingual federation, and the emergence of a "cosmic race". Maloney was one of a family of distinguished Trinidad scholars, resident in the United States.

1950–1960

The period of 1950–1960 saw the evolution of a substantial body of literature. Mais, Lamming, Selvon, Salkey, Carew, Hearne, Mittelholzer, Harris, Reid, Carter, Walcott, V.S. Naipaul, Keane, Roach and Brathwaite all emerged in this decade. Dennis Williams and Edward Brathwaite lived in Africa during this period, as had Peter Blackman (*My Song Is For All Men*). Reid, without having actually lived there had written in *The Leopard* an imaginatively impressive novel, set in Kenya. The theme of African continuity or conversely of divorce from Africa appeared in the poetry of Roach and Walcott, while Brathwaite was writing plays for Akan school children, and had by 1962 already given shape to the first half of *Masks*. Dennis Williams *Other Leopards* (1963) explored the split sensibility of the Caribbean *omowale* and left his schizophrenic hero in a desert, almost stripped of his old self, and savouring possibilities of growth in an inscrutable future.

The writers of this decade had a better opportunity to draw on a body of emerging thought and scholarship than had those of the generation before. In anthropology alone, for example, there was the work Melville and Frances Herskovits, George Eaton Simpson, M.G. Smith, Raymond Smith, Andrew Pearse and Daniel Crowley. Afro-Caribbean folklore, religions, folkways, folktales, rhetoric and patterns of performance suddenly became "visible", and we find Edward Brathwaite in an early essay; "Sir Galahad and The Islands" (BIM, 1957) suggesting that in these discoveries lay the basis for a new and alternative aesthetic.⁴ We also find him writing reviews of West Indian literature while in Ghana, suggesting, as Cameron had done earlier, that a knowledge of African oral traditions would help Afro-Caribbean writers in defining and using their own still vibrant oral traditions.⁵ He was in addition, a contributor to radio programmes in Ghana, and as an education officer, part of the new thrust towards the indigenization of education there, in that early post-Independence period.

In history, the impact of Eric Williams's *Capitalism and Slavery* began to be felt on the Mona Campus of the University of the West Indies. Elsa Goveia's *A Study on the Historiography of the British West Indies* provided those who were interested with a means of locating most of the current notions about the history and potential of Caribbean peoples in their historical context. George Lamming read and was deeply influenced by the ideas of C.L.R. James.

Horizons widened during this decade. Lamming's "The Negro Writer and His World", (1956)⁶ for example, moved far beyond the normal stereotyped discussion, to suggest the complex situation of the Black as diasporan, as twentieth century man, and as one who had to refashion both for himself and the benefit of the Other, that image which the Other had imposed on him, The artist is seen as rebel, as adamic refashioner of word and world, as lonely descender into private hell, and as illuminator of social and political reality. Lamming, who had read Richard Wright's *Black Boy* years before, was aware of himself as one of an international group of New World writers who were involved in a process of transforming the historic stereotypes which had been imposed on Black people, by speaking from within the self-in-maroonage. Significantly, "The Negro Writer and his

World", was a conference paper read at the First International Conference of Negro Writers, held in Paris in 1956. James Baldwin also attended that conference, and provides a perceptive account of that crucial period in one of his essays.

1960 to Present

Janheinz Jahn in *Muntu* (1958) had helped lift Afro-Caribbean literature out of its solitude and to locate it – often erroneously – in a wide Pan-Africanist context which had existed before in the dreams of a handful of scholars. His main concern was the literature of the Francophone Caribbean. Gabriel Couillard's *Race and Colour in Caribbean Literature* (1962) began for the Anglophone Caribbean the crucial business of comparative Caribbean literature. As we have seen, this was taking place while the writers themselves were, through exile, in the process of widening their horizons and deepening dimensions.

The Pan-African context, however, was but one of the possible contexts within which the literature of the diaspora could be placed. V.S. Naipaul was an outsider to such a context. His position of outsider/insider enabled him to mock it, caricature it, critically analyze it. Never for one moment could he be fully part of it, however much of it was part of him. For "seepage" from the world of Creoledom was viewed by him as violation and chaos.⁷ Naipaul, after a decade of wrestling with the problems confronting the Asiatic presence in a post-colonial society where the Afro-Creole presence was only just beginning to be defined and accepted as such, wrote *The Mimic Men*. In this novel he posits that the violations of history have impaired both the public and the private selves; both what I have termed *the imposed self* and *the self-in-maroonage*. Because of this each ethnic group is seen as festering in its separate cell; while the public forum of school, parliament or business provides them with no real possibility, no common ground for dialogue. "Mimicry" in that novel is more than simple copying of other people's stuff. It is the result of the attenuation and destruction of will through historical process, the loss of the capacity for choice and the possibility of self-hood and because of these things, the openness of the psyche's shell to every chance, opinion, fashion and style, and the replacement of willed choice by role-playing.

Derek Walcott could not be satisfactorily placed in a Pan-African context either. His stance, which he eventually defined as "mulatto"⁸ was one of Janus-faced ambivalence which could at one and the same time theoretically reject and accept both Africa and Europe in the Caribbean. Lamming, indeed, notes ambivalence as one of the major aspects of the Caribbean sensibility, particularly when it faces the dilemma of affirming an 'African' presence.⁹ Walcott's seminal work seems always to grow out of this ambivalence. He has called it "making creative use of schizophrenia." In practice, this has meant the display of considerable strength in the affirmation of a European presence in the Caribbean sensibility and a considerable bitterness in confronting the resurgence of an African one.¹⁰

Just as Naipaul is able to deny the validity of the inner self-in-maroonage, Walcott is, in "The Muse of History" able to reject all the manifestations of this inner self – the drums, music style, rhetoric, religion, symbolism, etc. – as the basis for a new aesthetic. The difference between the outsider/insider position of the "Asiatic" and the "schizophrenic" position of the "mulatto" is that the latter is generally forced to affirm whatever he denies. Hence Walcott accepts the drums, music, style rhetoric, folklore, dance and so forth as a viable basis for the construction of a New World drama, and has recently included in his poetry some of the very elements for which he has roundly abused a host of unnamed other Caribbean poets.

Wilson Harris could not be fitted into a Pan-African context. He started with the notion of the Caribbean and New World sensibility as "the latent ground of old and new personalities" – a

meeting place of the crumbling old world and the unborn new one. In the unnamed, untamed, osmotic heartland of this New World – aptly symbolized by the virgin forests, black inland rivers, and extensive savannahs of Guyana – all primal cosmologies, mythologies, dreams of civilization and conquest meet, intersect, echo or parallel each other, creating tension conflict, and at the same time infinite possibility. Yet the vessels within which these cosmologies meet are an odd collection of rum guzzlers, murderers, delirious pork-nockers, money-lenders, whores, cattle-ranchers, rustlers, land-surveyors, and psychotics from the coast of “domesticity and lights,” who find themselves like white America’s newest Thoreau, Jim Jones, in the Guyana forest of the night. There, all these people find nothing but themselves; the self stripped of its social, ethnic or economic prop; and the result of such encounter is disintegration and the possibility of transformation through lived ordeal.

Harris’s preoccupation with inner quest and cosmic issues had its base in a very particular sense and knowledge of the Guyanese political scenario. There, more than anywhere else in the English-speaking Caribbean, was the visible evidence of that plural, schismatic society, which the sociologists were trying to define in the sixties.²¹ There is no doubt that the break-up of the PPP and with it the African and East Indian coalition in Guyana (1954–57) is partially responsible for the themes of Harris’s first four novels *Palace of the Peacock*, *The Far Journey of Oudin*, *The Whole Armour* and *The Secret Ladder* (1961–65). In these novels – the first two in particular – history is ordeal, a legacy of bitterness and guilt. It has maimed the psyches of both colonizer and colonized, and established brutal authoritarian and materialist patterns, not only in Euro/Afro-Creole society but also within the world of the indentured East Indian peasantry and their descendants. The ghost of this legacy of guilt, materialism, brutality and psychic crippledom cannot be laid by amnesia or evasion, but by confrontation and atonement, and since the crippledom exists within the psyche and has been maintained by ex-colonial peoples long after the physical withdrawal of the colonizers, then confrontation and atonement have to occur within the psyche.

Where Naipaul’s people remain paralyzed before their crippledom, and Walcott, faced with the maimed remains of history at one point advocates amnesia, Harris like the Hindus or the Buddhists, involves the psyche in terrible and agonizing Kharmic processes, in which the intolerable burden of history has to be borne and worn because it is our own burden. Time has to be imaginatively re-entered and relived until one becomes worthy of reprieve or movement beyond. The price of becoming a person in the sense that Harris understands personhood requires a *movement through history* then *movement beyond history*; a gradual peeling off of the old personality, a divestment of the props of colour, status, race, power and authority. Walcott eventually adopts a similar position in his play *Dream on Monkey Mountain* which owes much conceptually to Harris.

By the mid-sixties, then, the Pan-African paradigm had proven inadequate in the face of the multifaceted complexity of the total Caribbean experience. It was qualified by the notion of an ethnically plural and culturally diverse archipelago; by the idea of a mulatto heritage in which European and African elements are blended; and by the notion of an emerging indigenized Caribbean tradition which was flexible, complex and had grown, or was growing out of the confrontation, competition, intersection and collapse of several peoples, life-styles and cultures over a process of time and under pressure from a rigid, authoritarian and exploitative system.

If Harris’s work suggests the interior dimensions of this shift in perception, Lamming’s *Of Age and Innocence* was the first serious attempt to deal with its political aspect. Coming in the wake of the collapse of multi-ethnic politics in Guyana, this novel reveals the deep sense of schism running through West Indian society, as well as the desperate or resolute hope of unity in an open and ominous future. Secrecy and communion constitute the opposite poles of this novel. True political liberation can only be based on open dialogue, shared experience and communion both within and

between ethnic groups; and communion requires trust, absolute candour and honesty between the leadership and the people on the one hand, and between the different ethnic groups in a culturally diverse society.

But these qualities of openness, trust and candour have never been permitted existence in a colonial situation such as the one described earlier in this paper. Thus secrecy and mistrust permeate the relationship between Africans and Indians, the major ethnic groups in *Of Age and Innocence*, and become the catalyst for the tragic divisions which occur towards the end of the novel. If *In the Castle of My Skin* (1953) ended with a perception of the complexity of the African heritage, and an emerging vision of the spiritual and emotional oneness of the Black experience, *Of Age and Innocence* ends with the more complex vision of a multi-ethnic society in which the African heritage is only one of the many heritages competing for visibility and political presence, and Pan-Africanism a source of strength or a prop only to one segment of the population. *Of Age and Innocence* also ends with the embryonic dream of the younger generation; a dream – like Martin Luther King's – of openness, graciousness, cultural exchange in a world where there are no secrets, only a sharing of modes of living and seeing. It is the single hopeful possibility Lamming permits in a horizon of omen and smouldering catastrophe.

The intolerable wrestle between dream and reality has intensified since the mid-sixties. Far from achieving dialogue and communion among the oppressed, Caribbean societies have deepened the divisions of class and race. Central to this development was the Black Power movement in America, which forty years after Garvey reopened the questions about the self-perception, economic position, and real presence of Black people in America. These questions had to be reopened; and viewed positively, the profound reassessment of the situation of Black people in the diaspora has led to a deepening of consciousness both in America and the Caribbean. There are far more people who are aware of their history and of the continuity of struggle, survival and creativity. While the system still seeks to marginalize Black people in general, there are far more people at every level of life who are articulate, resolute and conscious. There is far more publishing being done, more to read.

But it is also true to say that in places such as Trinidad and Guyana, the situation which Lamming explored in *Of Age and Innocence* still obtains. In those two countries, the two major races view each other as competitors and thus view each assertion of racial presence by the other, as a threat to self-hood. The masses of both African and Indians remain exploitable, divided and open to manipulation by politicians who because of the deepening of ethnic consciousness, have had for the last twenty years to project themselves as charismatic, ethnic culture heroes. Elsewhere in the Caribbean, politicians have even manipulated the religions of the oppressed, drawing on the fervour of the cult for political support which at points reaches fanaticism. This is true of Jamaica and Guyana and was true of Grenada and of course Haiti.

What one is dealing with in the 1970's then, is no longer the denial of racial presence to Afro-Caribbean people, but the exploitation of awakened racial consciousness by Black political leaders. So that the deepening of consciousness which could be a strength has ironically become the basis of fresh exploitation. Attempts to transcend racial and class divisions have taken the form of (a) verbal nationalism (b) a renewal of Marxist/Leninist ideology. The struggle for both of these ideals is just beginning, and promises to be long, paradoxical and bitter. Nationalism, for example, can easily become traditional insularity, which renders the region as a whole even more vulnerable in the world. Marxism/Leninism is, so far, advocated in a rigid and doctrinaire fashion, which seems to me to ignore the multi-faceted complexity of the Caribbean situation. It isn't surprising that in both Trinidad and Guyana, the cleavages along racial lines have remained and been most pronounced even in parties which have proclaimed a universalist Marxist ideology.

Since the mid-sixties various "directions" have been evident in the literature. Edward Kamau Brathwaite's trilogy *The Arrivants* (1967-1969) has been the mature fruit of an intense and richly various enquiry into the meaning of the African presence in the Caribbean and the Americas. One of his most important contributions has been his ceaseless experimentation with form, and his ability to use models drawn from the basic folk, folk-urban and proletarian forms of Black people of the diaspora, and on the continent of Africa.¹²

What has happened in Jamaica since then has resulted in an entirely different sort of poetry, best seen in his collection *Black + Blues* (1976). There, the poetry emerges out of the bleak mood which succeeded the assassination of the Black Power and Civil Rights movement in America and its collapse in the Caribbean. It constantly asks questions about the connection between Revolution and consciousness. In "Glass", for example, the poet posits that Revolution must be based on spiritual continuity with past revolutionary effort. But Blacks have inherited a tradition of discontinuity which, as Brathwaite had already illustrated in *Rights of Passage*, forces them to alternate between creative action and role-playing, revolutionary consciousness and the minstrel dance of death. How does one, beginning as colonials have had to begin, break the circle of repression/reprisal/retribution/revolution/repression? What creative action brings the necessary release from this wheel?

Brathwaite asks these questions with respect to a society which is half-urban and half-primal, facing the full stress of modern life with very few visible resources. Under pressure this world begins to prophesy; to create song, legend, myth and dread omen out of the materials of everyday horror. Black people caught in the system, whether they jive in Harlem ("Glass"), or sharpen their ratchet knives in Kingston ("Springblade", "Starvation") become representative of all subjugated peoples, disoriented since the break-up of the Roman Empire and the formation of Western European civilizations. The Caribbean diaspora is placed in a long and vast historical context which has seen movement of peoples, disorientation, the extermination of millions of primal peoples in the Americas by the bearers of a superior technology of warfare, the confrontation of the materialistic West with the kingdoms of spirit in India, Africa and meso-America; the elevation of Western materialism into skyscraper, rocket, spaceship and mushroom cloud, until today the West predicts its own destruction, sees each new invention as an omen of catastrophe (*Future Shock*, *The Greening of America*, *Silent Spring*) and longs for its now abolished sense of wonder, the reinstatement of its dead gods.

Brathwaite's problem becomes that of the entire New World sensibility; that of locating his ex-primordial peoples in this context of movement, disequilibrium and destruction. It is Walcott's problem, that of Lamming's last two novels (*Water with Berries* and *Natives of My Person*, that of Carpentier, (*The Lost Steps*, *Explosion in a Cathedral*), Harris and Fuentes (*Terra Nostra*). It involves a profound reassessment of the meaning of European history, which Brathwaite had already begun in some of his earlier poems, (e.g., "Heretic," "Judas of Barcelona" in *Other Exiles*).

The two sets of possibilities represented by Harris's *Palace of the Peacock* and Naipaul's *The Mimic Men* now become the poles between which our self-perception swings. On the one hand there is the possibility of rebuilding the lost kingdoms of the spirit whose ruins remain as reminders of who we were. How we are to do this becomes the basis of fresh debate. Is Tom's transformation into Ogun still possible? Can Makak really return to the green beginnings? Will Donne ever attain the palace of the peacock or Mohammed be purged by the refining fire of spirit? Naipaul's constant answer to this has been a resolute NO.

Brathwaite, with all his hopes for revolutionary transformation, has grave doubts. On the one hand the ruined city man has created roots and prophecy, and his rumble of consciousness moves like an earthquake under the frail structures of "our mindless architects." But on the other hand,

the city man is a victim who sees "vistas of rot only." Each new generation is "a new generation of clogged gutters," and constantly betrays its lightning flashes of intuitive vision: "the flash of dark into which I have carved no holy place." ("Caliban").

So that if *The Arrivants* moved with the faith of spiritual dialectic towards an equilibrium of negation and affirmation, void and structured form, silence and widening circle of sound, *Black + Blues*, constitutes a veritable *de profundis* of catastrophe. The landscape is more dreary the manscape more ravaged. The result in terms of form is directness and plainness of statement on the one hand, and a restless unfocussed turbulence on the other. There is a greater intellectual width and depth and a burning intensity of inner search.

Fierceness and bleakness of vision are characteristic of the 1970's. Our poets at home have become furiously driven men. Walcott, Carter, Brathwaite, McNeill, Scott, Roach or Questel all share this "driven" quality, which is a direct response to the quality of chaos which exists in the contemporary Caribbean. One has travelled a considerable distance from the simple vision of the thirties and forties. The revolution of self-perception has always been taking place; and it continues, grows increasingly more complex and multi-faceted. It embraces now both the notion of ethnic heritages and their competition and confrontation in the contemporary post-independence Caribbean. It involves the relentless class struggle, and the survival of the structures and instruments of exploitation and repression. It hovers between the alternatives of adamic renewal or return, and existentialist sense of void. It challenges conventional notions of history and is part of a vast worldwide movement to relocate the submerged cultures of the devastated in the kingdom of human and humane achievement.

Notes

1. Gordon Rohlehr, 'The Folk in Caribbean Literature,' *Tapia* vol. 2 nos. 11 and 12 (December 17 and 24, 1973).
2. Gordon Rohlehr, 'Forty Years of Calypso,' *Tapia* vol. 2 nos. 1, 2 and 3 (September 1972).
3. N. Cameron, *The Evolution of the Negro* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1970), originally published in 1926 and 1934, in Georgetown, Guyana.
4. Gordon Rohlehr, 'The Creative Writer and Society,' *Kaie*, (Guyana) no. 11, (August 1973): 48-77.
5. Edward Brathwaite, 'Review of *Voices from Ghana*,' *Bim* 30 (January-June 1960): 88-90.
6. George Lamming, 'The Negro Writer and His World,' *Caribbean Quarterly* vol. 5 no. 2 (February 1958).
7. Gordon Rohlehr, 'Predestination, Frustration and Symbolic Darkness in Naipaul's *A House for Mr Biswas*,' *Caribbean Quarterly* vol. X, no. 1 (1964): 3-11; also Gordon Rohlehr, 'The Ironic Approach,' in *Modern Black Novelists* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1971), 162-76.
8. Derek Walcott, 'What the Twilight Says: An Overture,' Introduction to *Dream on Monkey Mountain and Other Plays* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1970); 'The Muse of History,' in *Is Massa Day Dead?* Ed. Coombs O (Anchor, New York: Doubleday, 1974).
9. George Lamming, 'Caribbean Literature: the Black Rock of Africa,' in *African Forum* vol. 1, no. 4 (Spring 1966): 32-52.
10. Derek Walcott previously cited. For my comments on this aspect of Walcott's work see: Gordon Rohlehr, 'My Strangled City,' *Caliban* vol. 3, no. 1, (Fall/Winter 1976): 50-122.
11. M.G. Smith, *The Plural Society in the British West Indies* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1965).
12. For a full-length study of Brathwaite's *Arrivants*, see Gordon Rohlehr, *Pathfinder: Black Awakening in The Arrivants of Edward Kamau Brathwaite* (Port-of-Spain, 1981).

Reluctant Matriarchs

Lucille Mathurin-Mair

The myth of the black matriarch, the mother-who-fathered countless generations of West Indians, and who in the process demoralised and feminised husband, lover, brother and son, originated historically in the concept of the slave woman as a specially privileged and authoritative person within the slave hierarchy.

She had, allegedly, unique access to white male attention: she consequently reaped the rewards of sexual collaboration.

But let us however look squarely at that white male/black female encounter. Winthrop Jordan in an analysis of the dynamics of interracial sex in the New World underlined its essentially coercive nature. "White men" he writes, "extended their dominion over their negro to the bed, where the sex act itself served as ritualistic re-enactment of the daily pattern of social dominance."¹ The relevance of this to the British Caribbean is clear.

A male witness appearing before the Parliamentary Committee of 1832 on Slavery in the West Indies stated the Jamaican situation in these terms: when asked "Do you mean that the state of slavery gives to the proprietor that extent of wealth or property which enables him to corrupt the women that are there?" he replied, "I mean particularly that it invests him with unlimited power over the body of his female slave."²

Legislation, or the lack of it, until nearly the end of slavery, condoned the mastery of the white man over the body of the black woman.

The Elizabethan Statute of Rape, which had been administered in Jamaica since 1731, protected only those women who were white, and/or free. It was not until 1822 that the case of an extraordinarily sadistic assault by a white planter of the parish of St. Elizabeth on a female slave child under ten years old served to stir the normally impassive creole conscience. Thomas Simpson, the accused, was tried in the Cornwall assizes, convicted and sentenced to hang. He petitioned for mercy: the Chief Justice and the Attorney General examined the legality of his trial and concluded that in fact the statute involved could not be enforced in cases "where rape is committed by a white person on a slave." Both officials deplored "this defect in the colony's criminal code" and sought a legislative remedy.³ As a result of their representation, the Jamaican House of Assembly in 1826 extended the law of carnal abuse and rape to cover those victims who were slaves.

The image of the mighty black woman has been further projected through her supposed dominance of the Caribbean slave family in the absence of a spouse.

This stereotype of the invisible and therefore powerless father, with its corollary of the visible and therefore powerful mother, requires persistent challenging on many fronts.

It is well known, but worth recalling, that the lion's share of the rewards for the birth of a slave infant on the plantation went not to the black man who fathered it, or even to the black woman

who bore it, but to the white overseer who controlled it, and who, with the slave owner, functioned in many essentials as virtual "paterfamilias."

And if the plantation did admittedly deny the black man much of his authority as father, it also usurped some of the female functions of "materfamilias." So that in the 1780's, William Ricketts, Jamaican planter of Canaan Estate in the parish of Westmoreland saw his responsibilities to his black "family" in this light, viz, ...

... "by having a room near my dwelling house I have raised 6 children. Feby and I have 9 more women ready to lye in here — I have now 26 from 3 years old to the breast at this place besides a swarm at my mountain, and I make it a rule to have them fed from my own table every day and in my sight which pleases their parent ..." ⁴

But even the image of the plantation as surrogate parent has complex dimensions, which clearly need further exploration. For current research points increasingly to stabler black male/female relationships during slavery than are usually assumed, and this has implications of significant complementary domestic roles for men and women. Recent demographic studies of the structure of slave households in western Jamaica have unearthed relatively strong evidence of the black male presence... "the woman-and-children household type was far from dominant."...⁵

These studies also indicate that the "matriarchal" syndrome may have been of greater significance in the mulatto slave household which, in a society dominated by the ascriptive force of race and colour, should not be confused with the black household.

In assessing the status of black women in slaveholding Jamaica, an additional consideration is the well established leadership roles assumed by the black man in many areas of communal slave activity, (religious, political and economic), which questions the concept of the emasculated male acquiescing in a domestic role subordinate to the female.

It is above all in the economic field that the status of the black woman, as a member of the slave labour force, modifies any claims for her of equality, much less of superiority, to any male in the society.

It is often assumed that slavery being essentially, if not exclusively, concerned with labour productivity, resulted in a rough levelling off of the sexes, and created a work unit of neuter gender. Male slaves were costed a bit more on the market, presumably having that much more muscle power to put into the agro-industrial machine. In fact the difference in the valuation of male and female slaves reflected a difference in kind, as well as in degree, of manual output: it reflected also the difference between the skilled and the unskilled worker.

The sugar plantation of the Caribbean, which consumed the largest volume of imported African labour, is one of the earliest capital-intensive and technologically demanding undertakings of the modern era, combining both large scale agricultural cultivation with relatively sophisticated manufacturing processes. Through a conscious policy of labour deployment, such an enterprise offered slave owners and managers every opportunity for sorting out the girls from the men. And one saw a form of sexual discrimination and oppression dramatically at work, within a group which was already the object of other forms of discrimination and oppression.

A wide range of samplings of the tasks performed by men and women on Jamaican estates during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries indicates that women, almost without exception, did field work, while men had access to artisan' skills. Even a scholar as deeply concerned as Professor Orlando Patterson is with what slavery did to the black masculine psyche cannot help commenting on the phenomenon at Green Park Estate, Trelawny, in 1823, and Rose Hall, St. James, in 1832, viz:

"One is struck by the fact that male slaves had a much wider range of occupations to choose from than females: apart from being domestics and field-hands, the latter could only be washerwomen, cooks and nurses."⁶

Craton and Walvin's analysis of the work force on Worthy Park Estate, St. John's in Jamaica in 1789 and 1793 reveal the same trend. In 1789, 70 women out of a female slave population of 162 worked in the fields, in comparison with 29 men out of a possible 177. In 1793, 107 women out of a total of 244 were put in the field, in contrast to 92 men out of a total of 284. The authors observe, viz:

"While the work of the female slaves was concentrated in the fields, the energy and skills of the men had to be channelled into the great variety of functions vital to sugar production."⁷

The great variety of functions which could be performed by men included those of carpenters, wheelwrights, coopers, masons, sawyers, boilers, wainmen, boatswains, fishermen, blacksmiths: findings of other estates have shown ratios ranging from 25% to 60% of the men engaged in such skilled tasks: whereas almost 100% of the female task force have been found in individual areas to be in the unskilled area of plantation work. The semi-professional rating of the "nurse" and "midwife" proved in many instances to be a euphemism for a superannuated field worker; a male artisan was more likely than not to have acquired his techniques through apprenticeship. Domestic service, the other avenue open to the woman, with its highly debatable "privileges," in any event seldom absorbed more than 10% of female slaves, and was very largely the preserve of mulattoes.

Towards the later years of slavery, sugar estates, which dominated Jamaica's utilisation of land, labour and capital, had a marked excess of female slaves, 100 women to every 92 men.⁹ As has been indicated, women were preponderant in the field gangs. By the eve of emancipation, not only were the majority of Jamaican black women labourers in the field, but the majority of Jamaica's labourers in the field were black women.

And what this did to the black female psyche has yet to be fully assessed.

"No other group of slaves," writes Professor Elsa Goveia, "was so completely subject to the harsh necessities of slavery as an industrial system. The life of the ordinary field slave was characterised by coercion and dependence. The gangs of field slaves were worked for long hours under discipline of the whip. . . since the field slaves had fewer opportunities for earning a cash income than most other slaves, they relied heavily on the master for the necessities of life ... [they] were maintained by their owners on the bare margin of subsistence ... though they did the most laborious work their standard of living was generally lower than that of any other group of slaves."¹⁰

Occupation was in pre- and post-emancipation Jamaica, a major status-identifying factor: the emphasis on technical expertise, the dominance of the work-situation in slotting the individual into his or her social niche, was particularly crucial in a New World plantation society organised primarily towards a single economic goal. Skills opened up opportunities for profitable employment over and above what the individual estate could absorb: surplus labour could purchase material comforts, could do more: with the use of one's trained hands, it was possible to purchase freedom and to restore human status. For the woman, job-degradation closed this vital avenue to independence and respect.

One of the most remarkable movements of West Indian people in the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries has been the exodus of free black labour and, in particular, free black female labour, from estate work. In 1844, the year of Jamaica's first census, 80% of all persons at work were engaged in agriculture. A hundred years later, the proportion was 47%. The woman's participation in agriculture fell from 57% in 1921, to 28% in 1943.¹¹ In 1972 it was less than 20%.¹²

Escaping from the land, she headed for the towns, where 43% of Jamaica's women, (compared with 39% of its men), now live. But her mobility led her to another vocational deadend: she exchanged the oppressions of the canefields for those of the city's kitchens. 125,000 Jamaican women, or approximately 40% of the females on the labour market in 1972, were in "service" occupations.¹² Overworked and underpaid house helps, still often required to "live in," now dominate the female working population: unlike the multiple complexion of commerce which employs some 15% of working women, and favours the lighter-skinned, the colour of domestics is preponderantly black. Indices of their low status are their wage rate, averaging \$8 weekly — the worst in the national economy — their unemployment rate, 34% — also the worst — and their exclusion from trade union organisation.

All of these factors reflect the society's perception of women as workers without skills, reservoirs of cheap human power, always available for exploitation: so that the sophisticated sectors of the economy carefully exclude them from access to expertise and status. Today's Caribbean's "service" industry par excellence, tourism, creates growing demands for updated skills. But the occupational hierarchy of its hotels remains stratified on sexual lines. So its female staff constitutes the largest, lowest paid and least prestigious category of worker, the chamber-maid. And in the kitchen, the male head cook, unquestionably skilled, reigns supreme.

The persistent prejudice which relegates woman and her tasks to the bottom of the vocational/technological ladder permeates new enterprises. So that the appropriately named industrial "estates" of today reproduce the structures and relationships of older plantations: and the female technician, when she is found in these enterprises (some 7% or so of her sex), rates scarcely higher than the manual untrained worker. The processes of garment factories, extensions of "women's skills," condemn her to the most exploitative conditions of the modern sector.

Any analysis of the status of Caribbean woman today has to take into account the occupational context in which the black majority functions, relative to the occupational positionings of the rest of the society. Her alleged position of influence and power in the family and community has to be judged against the ground base of the lowest status-bearing jobs which the society has always allocated to her.

The rather tired cliché of the black matriarch perhaps contains some validity in terms of the numbers of women who head their own households (approximately one-third of Jamaica's adult females in 1972) and in terms of the moral strength they can, and do, exercise within the family.

But one has to register considerable reservations about the assumption that to be a female head of a household is to have some kind of natural access to authority. A considerable number of the single female heads are among the most powerless of the society, the absence of a spouse often implying the absence of a stable family income on which the household can function decently. The economically depressed condition of such a female breadwinner makes her as sexually vulnerable as she was in the darker days of her history. Not only does she outnumber the man in the city, she is a migrant, unsupported by the traditional familial and communal resources of the countryside which she has fled. Singlehanded, she is unable to control the forces which circumscribe her life and that of her children. She turns more and more to a new *paterfamilias*, the state, admitting her powerlessness to deal with the one meaningful role the society leaves to her, the role she traditionally values most, that of mother. Reluctantly, she now opts out, even of that.

The single most disturbing social phenomenon of contemporary Jamaica is the physical and/or moral abandonment of children by single young mothers.¹³

It may be the newly born infant left behind in the city's hospital bed, or the difficult boy-child handed to the welfare official. Statistically the cases are still relatively few; but they have been growing significantly in the past ten years. More than any other human indicator, abandonment of a child signals near social collapse: it points to a growing sense of desperation and despair in a group historically perceived as a main effective source of human power. Economic realities, past and present, have always made that perception a flawed one. The "Matriarch" of old, nevertheless, lived with the irony, wore her title well, and the race survived.

It should not now push its luck.

Notes

1. Winthrop Jordon, *White over Black* (1968).
2. Parliamentary Papers, 1832: Minutes of Evidence taken before the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Slavery.
3. Colonial Office Papers 137/153: 1822.
4. Ricketts/Jervis Family Papers 1762-1842. Add Ms. 30001, (British Museum).
5. B.W. Higman, 'Household Structure and Fertility on Jamaica Slave Plantations' (1973).
6. Orlando Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery* (1967).
7. Michael Craton and James Walvin, *A Jamaican Plantation, the History of Worthy Park 1670-1970* (1970).
8. Lucille Mathurin, 'A Historical Study of Jamaican Women 1655-1844,' Ph.D. Thesis, U.W.I. (1974).
9. B.W. Higman, 'The Demography of Slavery in Jamaica 1817-1834,' Ph.D. thesis, U.W.I. (1971).
10. Elsa Goveia, *Slave Society in the British Leeward Islands at the end of the eighteenth century* (1965)
11. George Roberts, *The Population of Jamaica* (1957).
12. The Jamaica Labour Force 1972; Population Census, 1970, Dept. of Statistics.
13. Erna Brodber, *Abandonment of Children in Jamaica*, (1974).